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Special Issue

The Hudson's Bay Company and The Fur Trade: 1670-1870

Glyndwr Williams

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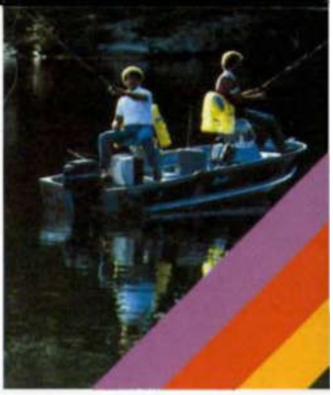

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THE HUDSON'S BAY COMPANY AND THE FUR TRADE: 1670-1870

By GLYNDWR WILLIAMS

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Originally intended as an updating of the writer's 'Highlights of the First Two Hundred Years of the Hudson's Bay Company', published in the Autumn 1970 issue of *The Beaver*, this piece has so changed in shape and emphasis during writing that it seemed appropriate to give it a different title. Although some material remains from the earlier issue, and a chronological framework has been retained, new sections have been incorporated to indicate the work done on fur-trade history since 1970, much of it by a new generation of scholars. References to some of these books and articles will be found in the guide to 'Further Reading'.

COVER: The first public sale of furs by the Hudson's Bay Company, held in Garraway's Coffee House, London, 1672.
From a painting believed to be by Edward North, undated.

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The Hudson's Bay Company and the Fur Trade 1670-1870

I. THE EARLY YEARS

TO ITS FIRST EUROPEAN DISCOVERERS the shoreline of Hudson Bay appeared to mark the edge of a bleak, uninhabitable wilderness. Hopes that the region might be the gateway to the Pacific faded as a series of expeditions in the early seventeenth century pushed their way through the 'furious overfall' of Hudson Strait and into the great bay beyond, only to find their path westward blocked by an ice-bound coast. Nor did the disappointed explorers find compensation in commercial benefits. During the winter of 1610-11 Henry Hudson had traded two beaver and some deer skins from an Indian, but later expeditions failed to match even that modest total. The wintering expeditions of Thomas Button, Jens Munk and Thomas James saw no Indians, and trapped no furs. In the published narratives Hudson Bay loomed as a scene of desolation and calamity: of Hudson's casting adrift, of privation and death for the crews that wintered there. For many it was the region described in *The Strange and Dangerous Voyage of Captain Thomas James,* of monstrous ice formations and ground frozen 'ten feet deepe'.

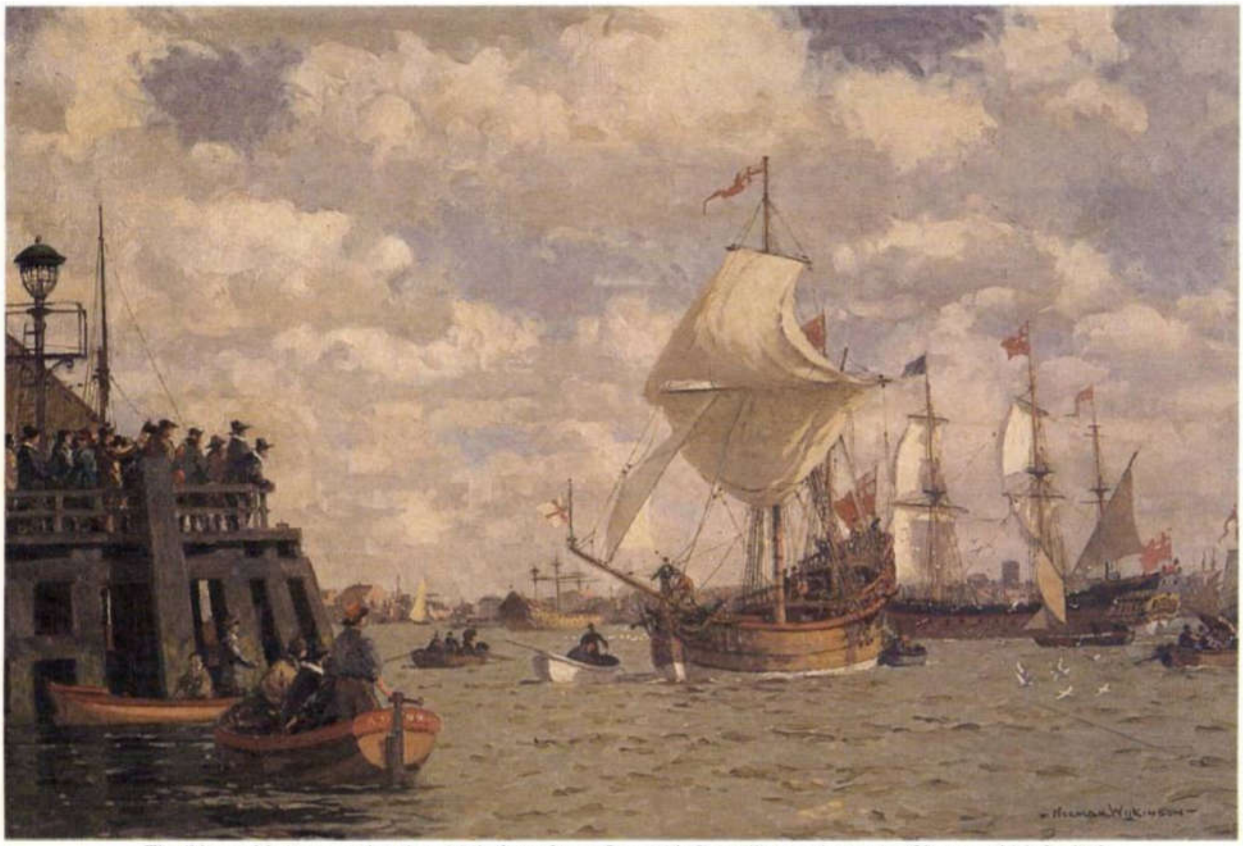
The first gradual awareness of the potential importance of Hudson Bay came from the French in Canada, who hesitantly identified the sea to the north of which their Indian traders spoke, with the bay discovered and then abandoned by the English. As the *coureurs de bois* travelled among the Indians northwest of the St Lawrence they heard more about the source of the furs brought in to them. The Hurons reported that they received much of their beaver from the 'Christinos' or Cree Indians who lived on the other side of the height of land near the 'Bay of the North'. Two of the French traders in particular, Médard Chouart (the Sieur des Groseilliers) and Pierre Esprit Radisson, were determined to bypass the Indian middlemen and trade direct with the Cree, who 'cloath themselves all over with castors' skins in winter, in summer of staggs' skins. They are the best huntsmen of all America . . .' Radisson and Groseilliers returned from their westward wanderings which in 1659-60 took them to Lake Superior (though almost certainly not to Hudson Bay itself, as Radisson claimed) with a splendid haul of furs and radical proposals for the future of the northern fur trade. Their discovery that the centre of the trade lay beyond Lake Superior convinced them that the most direct way to obtain furs from the country of the Crees was not by the tortuous canoe journey back to the St Lawrence but by the much shorter carry down to the shores of Hudson Bay, and then out by ocean-going ship. It was this project which the two Frenchmen took to England in 1665 after their failure to secure support from French officialdom for their plans.

In England Radisson and Groseilliers first attracted attention with their claim of having passed through Hudson Bay to the South Sea, and back, all within a matter of weeks. It was probably this reviving of old memories of Northwest Passage attempts which gave them their introduction to the court of Charles II, but it would have been their analysis of the potentialities of the northern fur trade which interested a wider circle of backers. Although only one member of the consortium of ministers, courtiers and businessmen which gave modest support to the *Nonsuch* venture of 1668 seems to have had any previous connection with furs, the American colonies had for some years sent shipments of furs to England. These found a ready sale in London to the furriers and to the new felt-making industry, although they did not approach in quality or quantity the furs reaching Europe from Canada. Certainly on the pioneer voyage of 1668, trade rather than discovery was uppermost, for whereas the captains were vaguely advised 'to have in yor. thoughts the discovery of the Passage into the South Sea', they were under firm orders to sail to where Radisson and Groseilliers directed 'in ordr to trade with the Indyans there'. The *Eaglet* with Radisson on board was soon forced back, but the 43-ton *Nonsuch* ketch and Groseilliers sailed on, navigated Hudson Strait, and wintered at Rupert River in James Bay (the 'Bottom of the Bay', as it was to become known). There the crew built a house of upright logs, thatched with 'a ranke sort of grass growing on ye marshes'. Fish and ptarmigan were plentiful, and except for some mild symptoms of scurvy the men kept in reasonable health. In the spring no fewer than three hundred Cree came down to trade. These Algonkian Indians were soon to become the familiar trading partners of the English. In this period the Eastern (Woods) Cree extended from the hinterland of James Bay east as far as Lake Mistassini, north to the Eastmain River, and to the west were pushing past the Nelson and Hayes rivers towards Churchill. The Western (Plains) Cree, linguistically related but with a different material culture, stretched inland with their Assiniboine allies, as far as the North Saskatchewan and the plains.

By Glyndwr Williams

Dr Glyndwr Williams is Head of Department and Professor of History, Queen Mary College, University of London, England, and a former general editor of the Hudson's Bay Record Society.

Photographs of documents and excerpts from its archives by permission of the Hudson's Bay Company.



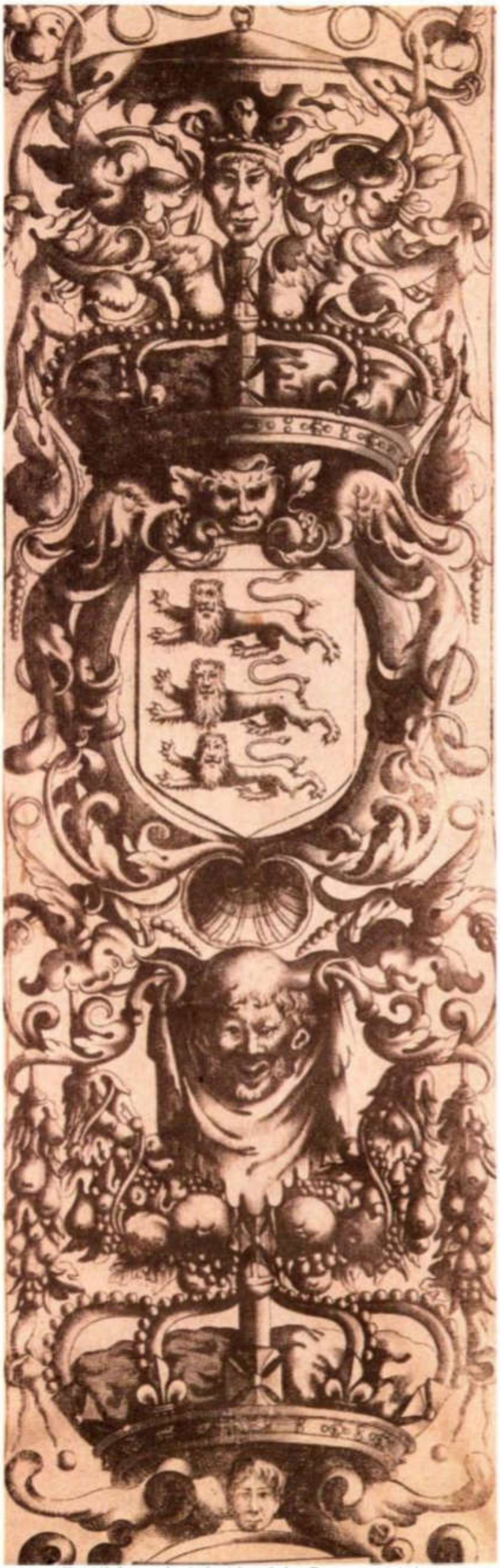
The 'Nonsuch' returns to London, 1669, from James Bay, with Groseilliers and a cargo of beaver which fetched a good price on the London market. Painted by Norman Wilkinson for the Hudson's Bay Company.

Presumably, Groseilliers' experience of the Indian trade helped to secure the cargo of beaver which the *Nonsuch* brought back to England in the autumn of 1669. Without doubt, this first sea-borne venture lent credibility to the speculative schemes of the two Frenchmen: the voyage had been made, the crew had survived a Bay winter, and furs had been obtained which fetched a good price on the London market.

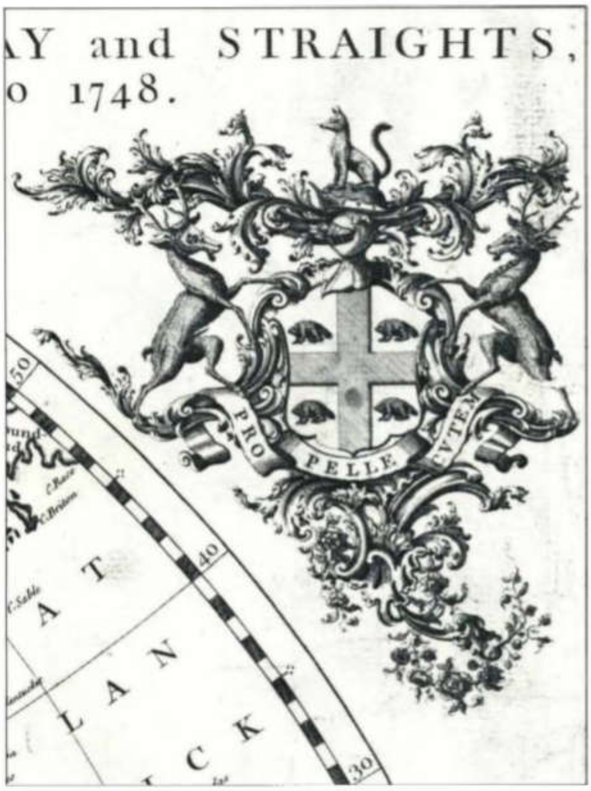
Within a few days of the return of the *Nonsuch* the investors obtained a monopoly of trade and mineral rights in the area opening beyond Hudson Strait, and these privileges were expressed in their definitive form in the royal charter of 1670 which incorporated eighteen subscribers as the 'Governor and Company of Adventurers of England tradeing into Hudsons Bay'. Several clauses in the charter were more in keeping with colonizing ventures of the period than with narrow commercial enterprises. Thus the Company was not only granted the 'sole Trade and Commerce' but was made the 'true and absolute Lordes and Proprietors' of an immense region loosely defined as 'all the Landes Countryes and Territoryes upon the Coastes and Confynes of the Seas' lying within Hudson Strait. In Rupert's Land, as the territory became known (Prince Rupert was the first Governor), the Company was free to adopt whatever trading arrangements it thought best. There was nothing in the charter to prevent it becoming a 'regulated company' in which members traded on their own account. Only as thoughts of colonization along the Bay shores were abandoned—the last reference by the Company to the possibility was in 1683—and the conditions and necessities of the Indian trade were appreciated, was the charter used to justify a monopolistic joint-stock arrangement. Even so, it offered no protection against the competition of French-Canadian or American colonial furs in the markets of Europe, and proved at times to be an uncertain defence against English interlopers. The Company owed its survival as a fur-trading organization less to the shelter of the charter than to its own commercial expertise. In international terms the charter was important in that it established an English sphere of influence north of the French area of trade, settlement and missions along the St Lawrence; the next half-century of tension and war was to show both the strengths and limitations of the Company's diplomatic status.

During the first years of its existence the Company, despite financial difficulties, the failure to pay any dividend until 1684, and the drifting away of many of the original subscribers, gradually learned the business of trading and selling furs. Policy was determined, in theory, by the Governor and his Committee of seven; more realistically, by the 'men of business' on the Committee, helped by the Secretary. Unlike in the eighteenth century, when the Governor tended to be a lawyer or businessman (or a mixture of both), and much involved with the running of the Company, the first governors were chosen for their pre-eminence in the nation's affairs. When Rupert died in 1682 he was succeeded by James, Duke of York, the future James II, and he was followed by John Churchill, the future Duke of Marlborough. Their value to the Company lay not in their attention to details of business, but in the political and diplomatic support it was hoped they would give to its operations. At the very least, this early period proved the viability of the maritime approach to the fur trade of the Canadian North. The sending in 1672 of three vessels to the Bay, with building materials as well as trade goods on board, showed the Company's determination to establish factories with permanent garrisons rather than to continue to trade on a casual, single-voyage basis. Under the direction of Charles Bayly, the improbable 'old Quaker with a long beard' who was the first Governor in the Bay, posts were built at the mouths of the Moose and Albany rivers, and a warehouse located on Charlton Island. Already during the 1670s the Company was settling into a routine in which its James Bay garrisons traded with the Indians who came by canoe down the rivers from the height of land each summer, and were supplied by ships sent out from England. With sailings uncertain, and ships' masters unreliable, the system had not achieved the mechanical regularity of its operations during the next century, but its outlines are plain to see.

In London, the Bay furs generally fetched a good price, though the market was an easy one to glut. As the Company's coat of arms suggests, the beaver occupied a dominant place in the Company's thinking. The first reference to the return of the *Nonsuch* in 1669 noted that the crew 'say Beaver is very plenty'. Its main value on



Detail from the left side of the first page of the Hudson's Bay Company's charter.

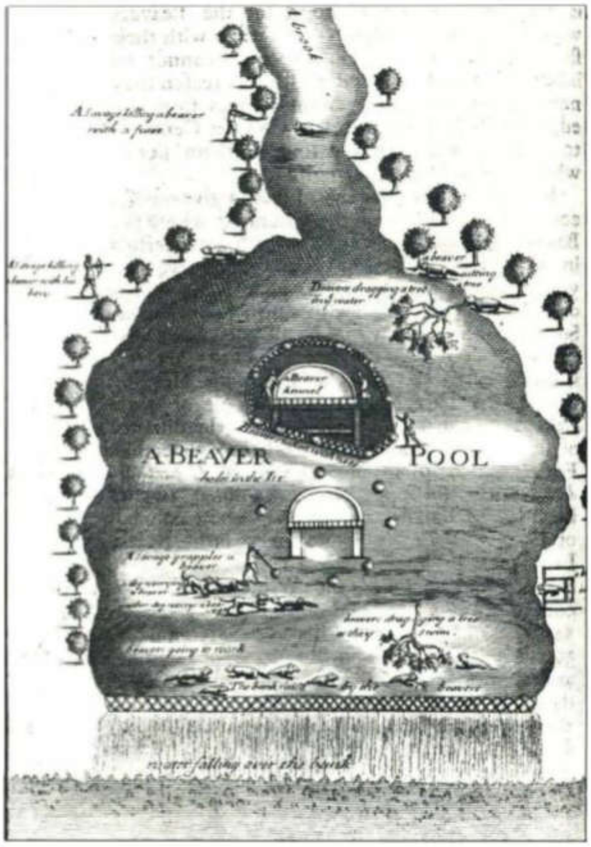


The Hudson's Bay Company coat of arms from a 'Map of North America with Hudson's Bay and Straights Anno 1748'.

the London market lay not in the pelt but in its thick, close under-wool—'the finest Down in the world', to use Lahontan's description. It was this which the felters used for the fashionable beaver hats, and which made *castor gras* or 'coat beaver' (skins worn by the Indians which in the process shed their long guard hairs) more in demand domestically than the dry or 'parchment beaver', much of which in this period was shipped to the Continent or Russia. As E. E. Rich has pointed out, the most convincing interpretation of the Company's motto, *Pro Pelle Cutem,* is that 'it wanted the skin, *cutem,* for the sake of the fleece, *pro pelle.*' The best supply of the supple, greasy coat beaver which the felters and hatters needed came from the Indians to the north where, as Radisson had noted, the Cree 'cloath themselves all over with castors' skins in winter'. In geographical terms the Hudson's Bay Company was admirably situated to tap this source, and it was eager to establish a post at Port Nelson on the shores of Hudson Bay proper, where the Nelson and Hayes rivers flowing from the interior brought it nearer the fine beaver of the Northwest. Its failure to escape from the more southerly confines of James Bay meant that it was not yet in a position to exploit the full advantages of its approach through Hudson Strait. From the beginning the Company used prime winter beaver as the standard by which it measured the value both of other furs and of its trade goods, and the Company 'Standard of Trade' revolved around the Made Beaver (MB) unit from Bayly's time until the end of our period. The Company took whatever furs were brought to its posts—marten, otter, fox, wolf, musquash—for it would be poor policy to turn away Indians ready to trade, and there were occasions when the small furs were more saleable than beaver when the market was glutted. Nevertheless, the beaver remained at the heart of the Company's trade until the beaver hat was replaced by the cheaper silk hat in the 1840s.

In Canada the French had shown an understandable concern about these English activities to the north, and in 1671 for the first time made the difficult journey overland from the St Lawrence to James Bay, by way of the Saguenay River and Lake Mistassini. The route involved two hundred portages, but French traders were soon active on the upper reaches of the rivers running down to James Bay where they intercepted the Indians on their way to trade at the Company posts. In 1674 and 1679 the journey was made again, and these reconnaissance probes revealed the defensive weakness of the English posts, built to resist the cold not assault, as one Frenchman put it. A decision by French mercantile interests to challenge the English position in the Bay was made easier by the worsening relations in Europe between the English and French governments; and in 1683 hostilities began in Hudson Bay which lasted, in sporadic fashion, for thirty years. Posts were attacked, captured, and restored; land and sea expeditions were mounted;

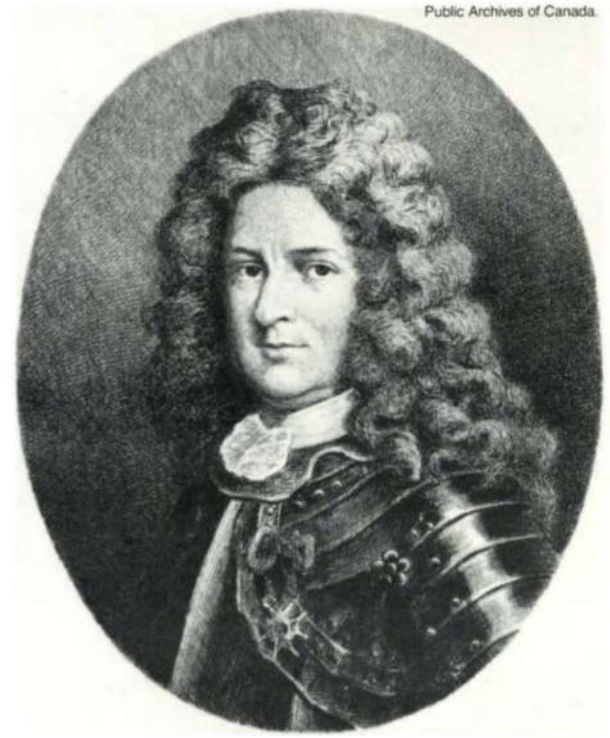
Different methods of hunting beaver. Illustration from Baron Lahontan's 'New Voyages to North America . . .', Volume 2, published in London, 1703.



and diplomatic arguments became increasingly intricate. It was not without significance that the first clashes came at Port Nelson, where in an extraordinary sequence of events a Company ship, a French sea-borne expedition from Quebec, and a Boston interloper, all arrived in 1682 within a few days of each other to establish posts. The three groups spent an uneasy winter before the French seized the other posts the next year. Although short-lived, the Company's establishment of York Fort marked an important expansion of its trading operations. As Denonville, Governor of New France, pointed out in 1685, an English post at Port Nelson was a standing temptation to the western tribes, who 'will not have far to go, and will find goods at a much lower rate than with us'.

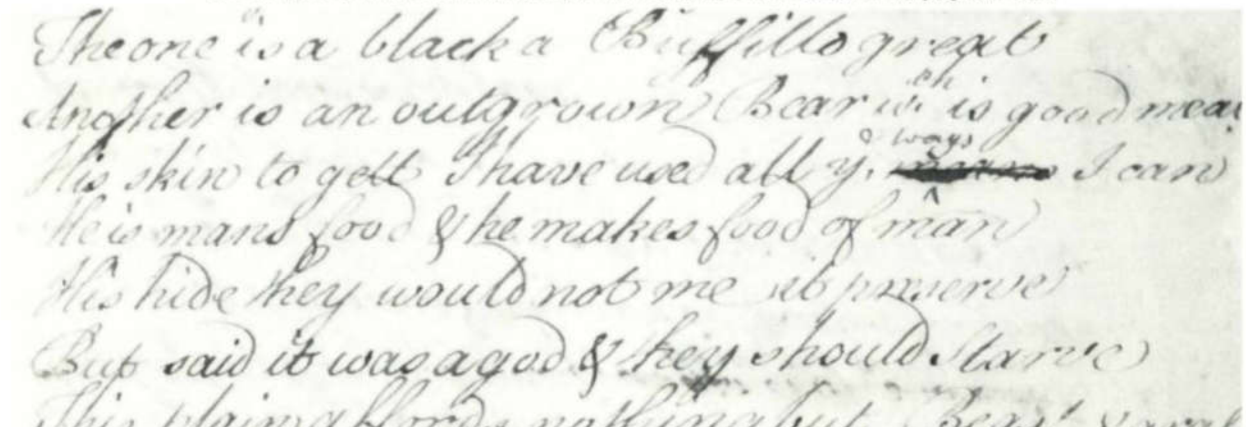
In the twists and turns of hostilities which dominated the Bay scene until the Treaty of Ryswick (1697) the Company generally fared badly at the hands of the French. For all the military terminology employed, neither the Company 'forts' nor their 'garrisons' impressed. Timber structures, imposing enough to the Indians perhaps, were feeble defences against cannons and mortars. The Company servants did not perform well as soldiers, nor was there any reason why they should. They were hired, and paid, as tradesmen, or craftsmen, or sloopers. Governor Sergeant's allegation that his besieged garrison at Albany in 1686 raised the question of pensions in the event of death or injury strikes an authentic note. The Canadian *voyageur,* particularly when supported by regular soldiers, made a more enterprising fighter, just as in the next century he was for long to outwit the Company servants on the inland routes. No regular English troops appeared in Hudson Bay, and only in 1696 and 1697 did naval vessels reinforce the Company's ships.

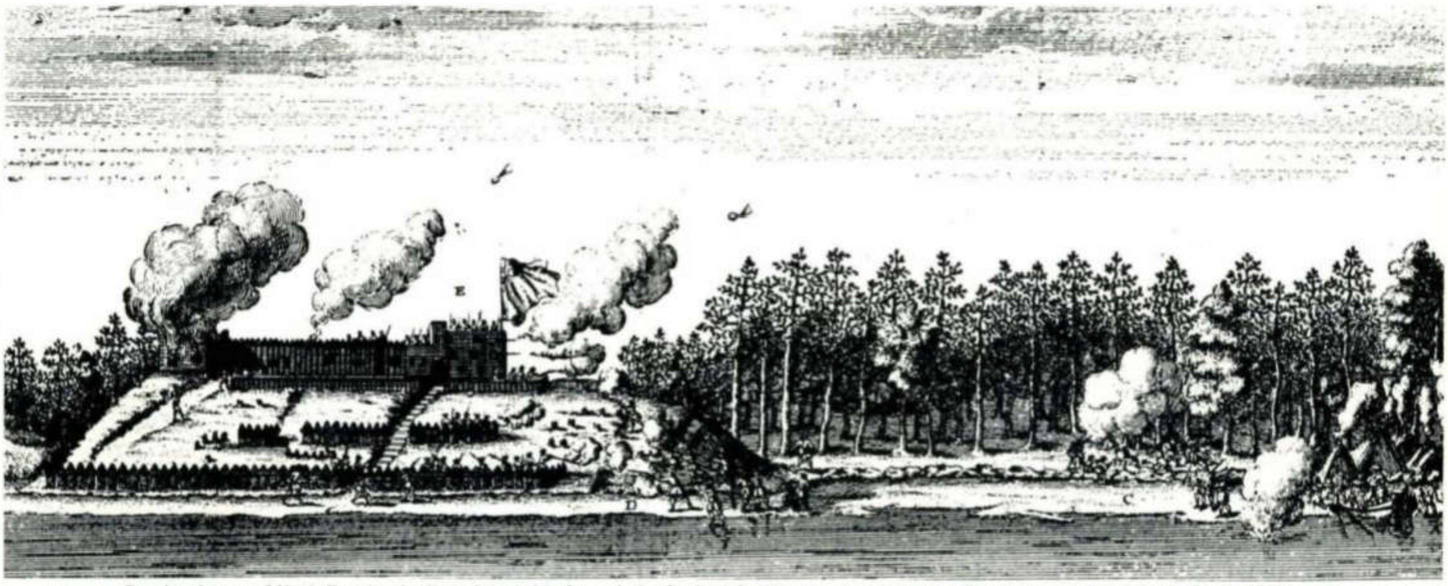
During this period of war and uncertainty it is not surprising that the Company devoted little attention to the interior, and although in 1690-2 the young Henry Kelsey made his celebrated inland journey from York it was as remarkable for the apparent lack of official interest in its implications as for Kelsey's own enterprise and courage. It was as if the expansionist ideas suggested by the great charter had disappeared along with the original ministerial and courtier investors, for the main Company stockholders and Committee members by now were


Public Archives of Canada.

Pierre Le Moyne d'Iberville, who recaptured York Fort in 1697, after which it remained in French hands until the Treaty of Utrecht in 1713.

Lines from the rhyming prologue to Henry Kelsey's journal of his journey in 1690. From documents presented to the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland by Major A.F. Dobbs, of Castle Dobbs, Carrickfergus, in 1926.


The one is a black a Buffillo great
Another is an outgrown Bear wch is good mea
His skin to gett I have used all ye ways ~~[illegible]~~ I can
He is mans food & he makes food of man
His hide they would not me it preserve
But said it was a god & they should Starve
This plain affords nothing but Beast & grass
And over it in three days time we past



Bombardment of York Fort by the French in 1697, from de La Potherie's 'Histoire de l'Amerique Septentrionale' Volume I (Paris, 1753).

financiers and merchants, shrewd but cautious. Kelsey's instructions from his superior at York—'to call, encourage, and invite, the remoter Indians to a trade with us'—represented the perennial desire of the trader to make direct contact with the primary producer and to outflank the middlemen. Travelling with Cree companions, Kelsey followed the track of the Assiniboine Indians southwest across the Saskatchewan and Red Deer rivers and on to the western plains. He was the first European to reach this area, thick with herds of buffalo, and with an Indian population more numerous and self-sufficient than any Hudson's Bay man had encountered. Here Kelsey met not only the Siouan-speaking Assiniboine, but also the mysterious 'Naywatamee Poets' (probably Atsina, members of the Blackfoot group of tribes), whose chief was too apprehensive of the Cree and their muskets to listen to Kelsey's proposal that his young men should bring down their furs direct to the Bay posts. What, if anything, the Company made of Kelsey's journey, is totally obscure. It failed to use, publish, or even preserve, the notes of his findings. No evidence of his wanderings appeared on contemporary maps; the journey was an isolated and soon-forgotten feat in an era when Company servants were reluctant to move away from the Bayside posts. Even Kelsey recorded how he left York for the interior 'with heavy heart'. The lack of essential birch and cedar for canoes that far north, and the determination of the London Committee to exercise a tight control over its servants and their trading activities, reinforced the established policy of relying on the quality and reliability of the Company goods to attract the Indians down to the Bay to trade.

In the Bay the French recapture of York in 1697 (the sixth time the post had changed hands) effectively nullified the terms of the Treaty of Ryswick as far as Hudson Bay was concerned. The Bay was indeed partitioned, but in reverse fashion to that agreed by the diplomats. The English retained James Bay, while the French operated from York (their Fort Bourbon). When war broke out again in 1702 the strenuous hostilities of the 1690s were not renewed in the Bay except for an abortive French attack on Albany in 1709. The financial burdens of the Company's military activities, together with the depressed state of the wartime market, meant that the Company failed to pay any dividend from 1690 to 1718, a twenty-eight-year freeze accepted with apparent equanimity by the stockholders who outlived it. In the changed political climate of post-Revolution England, the Company obtained Parliamentary confirmation of its charter in 1690, but approval was given for seven years only. An effort at renewal failed, and from 1698 onwards the Company's legal existence was dependent on the shaky foundations of royal prerogative. Even so, the Company survived the war years in better shape than its French counterparts. The furs shipped from Albany proved ample for the limited wartime market, while the French never succeeded at a time of glut in disposing of the splendid beaver traded at Fort Bourbon. These problems were reflected in the wavering French attitude to Hudson Bay in the prolonged peace negotiations of 1709-13, whereas the Company representatives were insistent that the English negotiators at Utrecht should demand the return of the whole Bay area. Their obstinacy may have provoked Bolingbroke's exasperated comment during the negotiations about 'these smug ancient gentlemen', but the final terms of the Treaty of Utrecht in 1713 restored the Bay and its environs to the Hudson's Bay Company.

◆

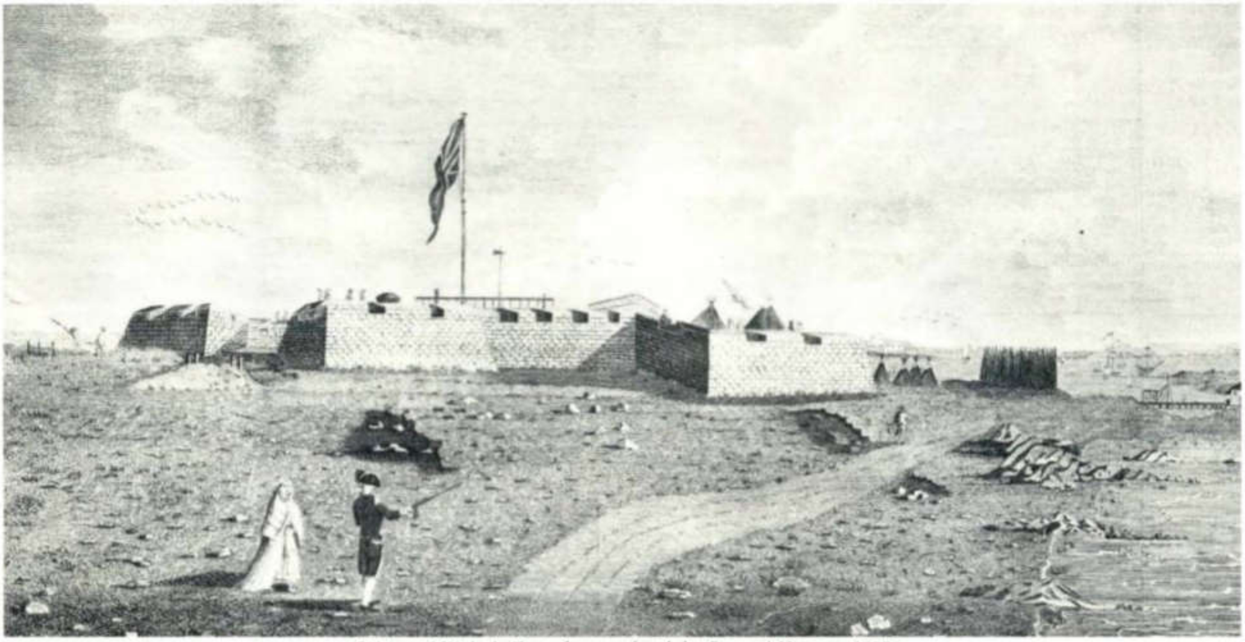
II. CONSOLIDATION AND CRISIS

IT WAS SOME YEARS after the Treaty of Utrecht ended the long disruption of the French wars before the Hudson's Bay Company regained stability and entered a period of quiet affluence. The dominant figure in the Bay in the immediate post-war period was James Knight, an imperious veteran who had been in the Company's employ since 1676, and had also served on the London Committee. He was appointed Governor in the Bay, with Kelsey as his deputy, and in 1714 he received the surrender of the Port Nelson area from the French. During the few years of life left to him, Knight was to set afoot the only important programme of exploration and inland expansion undertaken by the Company in the first half of the century.

The journals Knight kept at York contain elaborate explanations of his plans for the increase of Company trade and the discovery of the Northwest Passage. To Knight that elusive strait promised a way to an El Dorado far to the west, rumours of which had reached him in England, and prompted him to take to York 'Cruseables, Melting Potts, Borax &c for the Trial of Minerals'. Obsessed though he became with reports of gold, white men and a western ocean, Knight was also planning a major extension of the Company's more conventional trading operations. Out of range of regular European contact beyond the Churchill River were the Chipewyan, Athapaskan Indians who were wary of approaching the Bayside posts after suffering some bloody reverses at the hands of Crees equipped with firearms. To make peace between the Cree and Chipewyan, and to explore the country to the northwest, Knight sent William Stuart inland in 1715 with a band of Crees and a Chipewyan slave woman. Away almost a year, dependent on the Indians for guidance and support, without any surveying instruments except a compass, Stuart brought back with him to York some Chipewyan Indians and a confused account of his journey. Although his claim that he had travelled a thousand miles from York and reached latitude 67 °N. was clearly an exaggeration, Stuart was the first European to cross the Barrens, and he probably reached the vicinity of Great Slave Lake. As Knight interrogated Stuart and the Chipewyan he reflected in his journal on the country to the northwest, and in the daily entries can be dimly discerned a medley of Athapaskan tribes—Beaver, Slave, Dogrib and Yellowknife. While Knight's own plans turned to a sea rather than a land approach, he established in 1717 a new post at the mouth of the Churchill River, near the edge of Chipewyan territory, to bring in the 'Northern Indians' and their furs. He then returned to England to persuade the Company to fit out an expedition to the west coast of Hudson Bay and 'the Streights of Anian'. The venture turned into one of the tragedies of arctic exploration, for Knight's hopes foundered on the barren shores of Marble Island where his two vessels were trapped in 1719 and every member of the crews lost.

The disaster hardened both the unwillingness of the Company servants to stray far beyond the posts and the disinclination of the London Committee to engage in further costly, speculative ventures. In England a young Bencher of the Middle Temple, Bibye Lake, had become Governor in 1712, and he held that position until his death in 1743. During this unparalleled tenure of office, he stamped a lawyer's characteristics of caution and confidentiality on the operations of the Company. Under his guidance and that of the City men on the Committee, the Company prospered in a modest way after the untoward excitements of 1719-20 when the Knight expedition was lost, and the South Sea Bubble brought both temptation and uncertainty to the Company's financial operations in London. In the Bay a steady routine prevailed. Trade was firmly based on the main factories at York, Churchill, Albany and Moose (the latter re-established in 1730 after its abandonment during the French wars), with a smaller post at Eastmain River, set up in 1724. There were no inland posts and no inland explorations. Knight's post at Churchill was retained, but his vision of a springboard to the northwest was lost in the prolonged building operations on the site which eventually produced the incongruous massive stone defences of Prince of Wales's Fort. Details of the trade were supervised by correspondence from London in painstaking fashion. As it paid off the ships from the Bay each autumn, disposed of the furs at the best prices available, and then after Christmas began putting together the supplies, trade goods, servants and shipping for the next season, the Committee followed a timetable as unchanging as that of its Bay factors. It was an unspectacular but effective way of running a small company, and from 1718 regular dividends were paid.

If Lake's governorship led to quiet prosperity, it also saw the beginnings of resentment and opposition which after his death threatened to overturn the Company. By their very nature monopolistic companies were wedded to commercial secretiveness as a defence against the twin threats of foreign rivals and domestic interlopers. Under Lake the Hudson's Bay Company pursued this policy with obsessive intent, carefully guarding the knowledge accumulated by its servants over the years of living, trading and navigating in the subarctic conditions of the

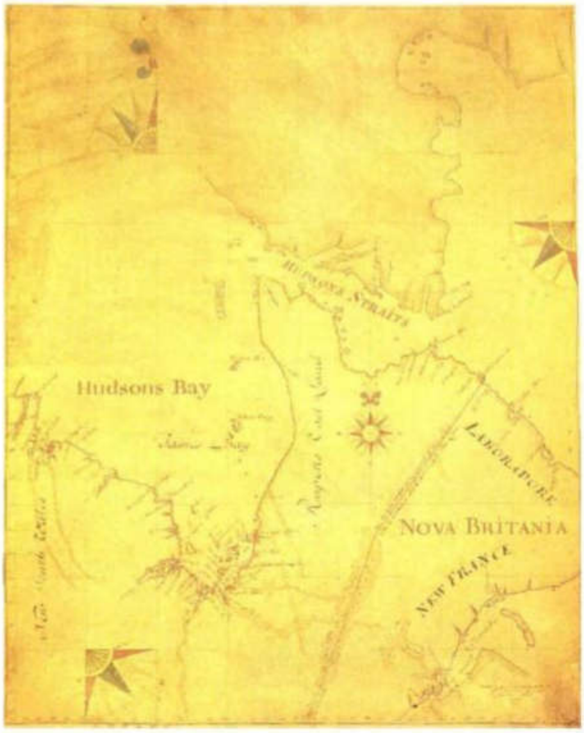


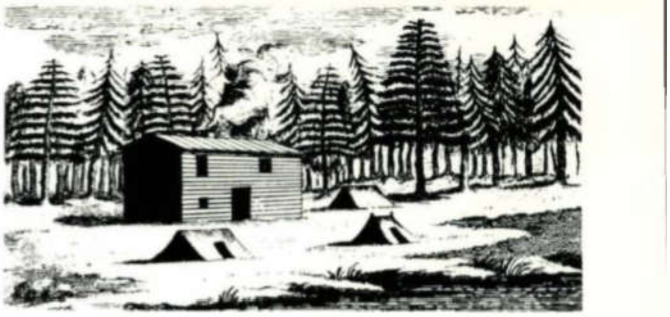
Prince of Wales's Fort, from a sketch by Samuel Hearne, 1777.

Bay. The indifferent ships' masters of the early period had been replaced by regular 'captains' who sailed the Company vessels to the Bay and back for twenty years or more, and whose safety record was remarkable. Continuity of experience was valued by the Company in both its ships' captains and its Bay factors, and it was experience not to be lightly divulged. Details of the timing and route of the difficult passage through Hudson Strait, the position of harbours in the Bay, methods of trade with the Indians, were kept from outsiders. Instructions from the London Committee to the Bay insisted that 'none of our servants do send any intelligence to or carry on any correspondence with any person whatsoever in London or elsewhere relating to the affairs of the Company.' Ships' journals, and letters brought home on the ships, were delivered to the Committee for scrutiny. Committee members themselves were warned against letting copies of the charter out of their possession. The Company's shares never came onto the open market, and their last public quotation was in 1700. Stock transfers were arranged privately, often from one member of a family to another, or between the thirty-five or so existing shareholders. No published record was available of the names either of stockholders or of the governing committee, and in a guide to the City of London Sir Bibye Lake was listed only as a director of the Royal African Company. When the second edition of John Oldmixon's *British Empire in America* was published in 1741, the sole additional entry on the Company since the first edition of 1708 was the rather stale news that its territories had been restored by the Treaty of Utrecht. On developments since 1713 the author could say nothing, since an application to the Company for information had gone unanswered despite his 'pressing instance'.

Up to a point the policy of close secrecy was effective. No interlopers ventured into Hudson Bay, and at home the Company slipped from public sight at a time when attacks on chartered monopolies were mounting. The chink in the Company's armour proved to be that chimera of arctic exploration, the Northwest Passage, for Lake and his fellow directors were unable to convince Arthur Dobbs, an Irish Member of Parliament with large if eccentric views on the expansion of British trade, that

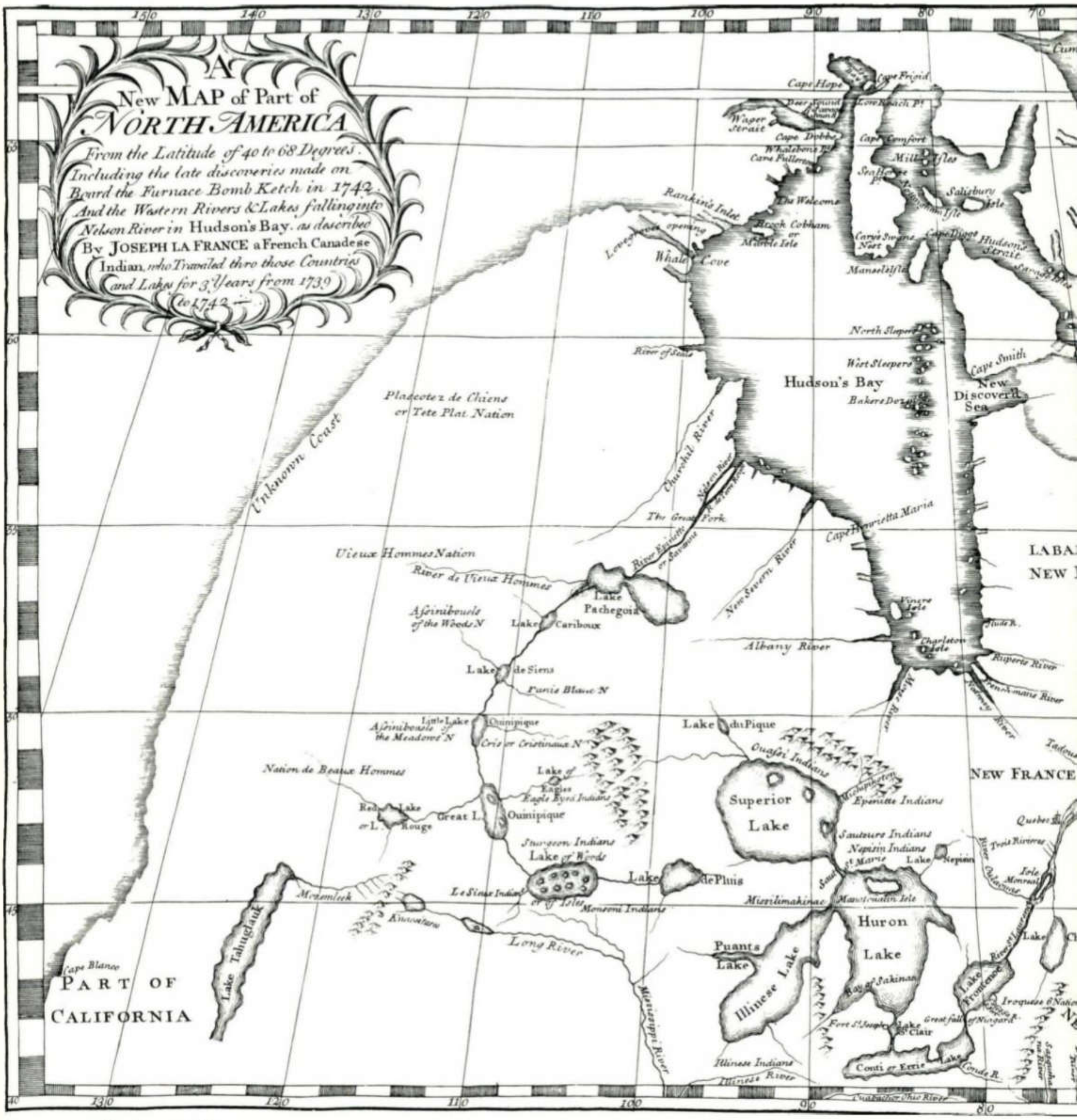
Map of 'Hudsons Bay and Straits' by Samuel Thornton, 1709.

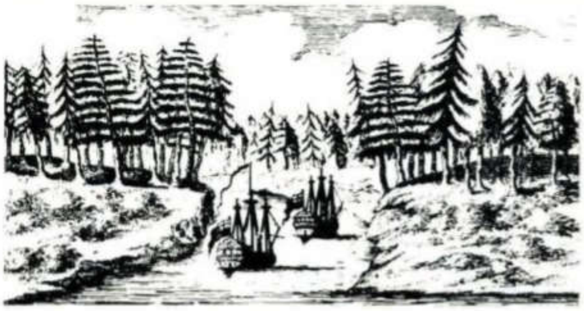


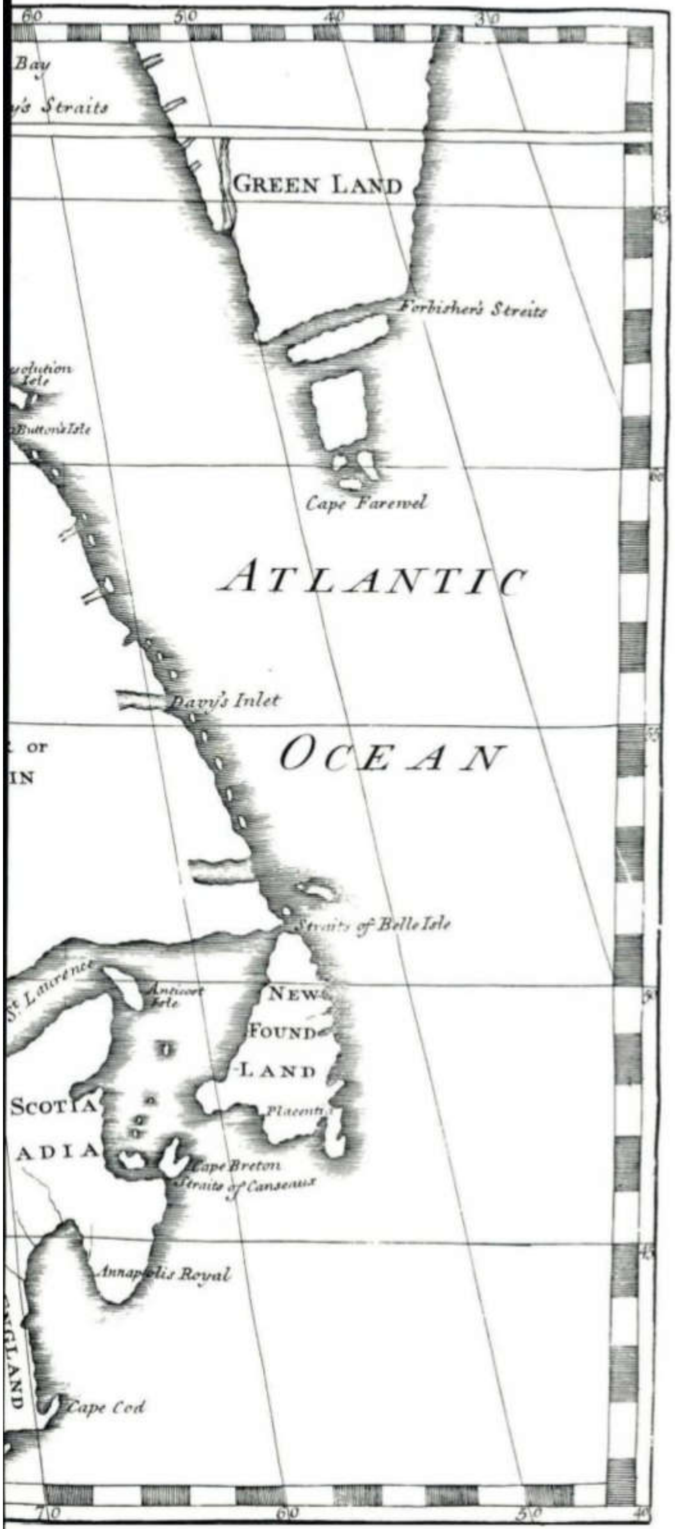


'New Map of Part of North America' from 'An Account of the Countries Adjoining to Hudson's Bay in the North-West Part of America . . .', by Arthur Dobbs, published in London, 1744.

Right: Wintering quarters of the Moor's expedition and his ships wintering in Ten Shilling Creek, Hayes River, 1746. From 'A Voyage to Hudson's Bay . . .' by Dobbs's agent, Henry Ellis.


A New MAP of Part of NORTH AMERICA
From the Latitude of 40 to 68 Degrees. Including the late discoveries made on Board the Furnace Bomb Ketch in 1742. And the Western Rivers & Lakes falling into Nelson River in Hudson's Bay, as described By JOSEPH LA FRANCE a French Canadese Indian, who Traveled thro those Countries and Lakes for 3 Years from 1739 to 1742.
150
140
130
120
110
100
90
80
70
60
55
50
45
40
Cape Hope
Cape Frigid
Wager Strait
Cape Dobbs
Cape Fullerton
Cape Comfort
Mills Isles
Salisbury Isle
Rankin's Inlet
The Welcome
Brook Cobham or Marble Isle
Whale Cove
Cape Digges
Hudson's Strait
Mansel Isle
North Sleepers
West Sleepers
Bakers Dozen
Cape Smith
New Discover'd Sea
Hudson's Bay
River of Seals
Churchill River
Nelson River
The Great Fork
Cape Henrietta Maria
New Severn River
Albany River
Charleton Isle
Ruperts River
Moose River
LABA
NEW
NEW FRANCE
Unknown Coast
Plascotez de Chiens or Tete Plat Nation
Vieux Hommes Nation
River de Vieux Hommes
Lake Pachegoia
Lake Cariboux
Assinibouels of the Woods N
Lake de Siens
Panis Blanc N
Little Lake Ouinipique
Assinibouels of the Meadows N
Cris or Cristinaux N
Nation de Beaux Hommes
Red Lake or L. Rouge
Great L. Ouinipique
Lake of Eagles
Eagle Eyed Indians
Sturgeon Indians
Lake of Woods
Le Sioux Indians
Lake dePluis
Lake du Pique
Ouassi Indians
Superior Lake
Sauteurs Indians
Nepisin Indians
Missilimakinac
Huron Lake
Puants Lake
Illinese Lake
Illinese Indians
Illinese River
Mississippi River
Long River
Mozemleek
Lake Tahuglauk
Cape Blanco
PART OF CALIFORNIA
Lake Frontenac
Iroquese 6 Nations
Conti or Errie Lake
Quebec
Trois Rivieres
Isle Monreal
Fort St Joseph
Lake St Clair
Great fall of Niagara
Ouabach or Ohio River

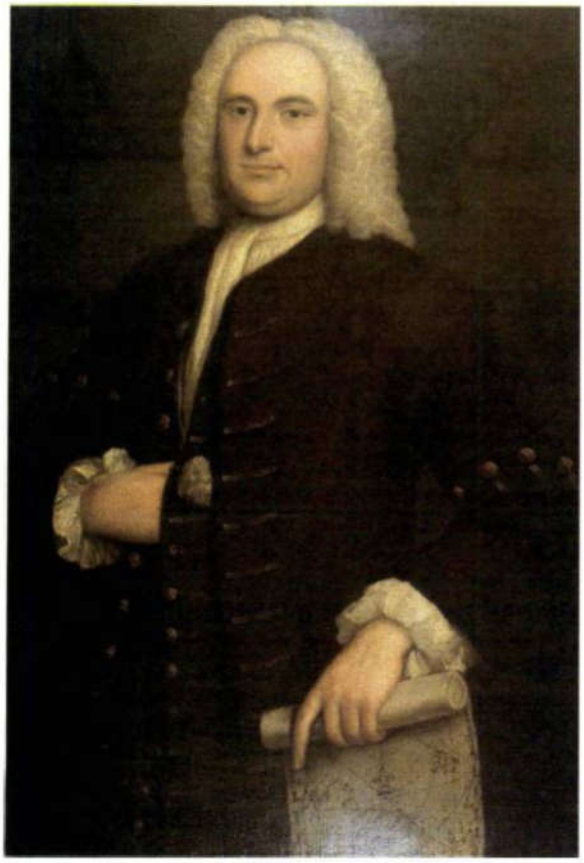




it had made a serious search. Frustrated by the Company, Dobbs turned to his political and mercantile contacts in London, and in 1741 a naval expedition commanded by Christopher Middleton, a former Company captain, sailed for Hudson Bay in quest of a passage. What most concerned the Company about the whole episode was not so much that the Middleton expedition, and a private discovery venture in 1746-7 commanded by another ex-Company captain, William Moor, might shield interloping activities—though that was always a possibility since both expeditions wintered near Company factories—as the realization that its affairs had become a matter of public interest. After the failure of Middleton's expedition, he and Dobbs became involved in a protracted pamphlet war in the course of which appeared the first book devoted solely to the Company and the Bay area, Dobbs's *Account of Hudson's Bay* (1744). Even before Middleton had sailed, Dobbs had written that he intended 'to see if we can't open the trade' of Hudson Bay, and the publication of his *Account* signalled the beginning of a full-scale assault on the Company and its privileges. Ignoring the complexities and overheads of the Bay trade, Dobbs juggled with the figures he had obtained from Middleton to show that the Company made 2,000 per cent profits. He also printed the charter, and contrasted its vast grant of territory with the Company's meagre footholds along the Bay shores.

As the merchants who supported Dobbs petitioned the Crown in 1748 for a rival charter, and in 1749 the House of Commons began investigating conditions and trade in Hudson Bay, the Company faced its most serious domestic challenge since incorporation. The report of the Parliamentary Committee in April 1749 printed the evidence of twenty-two witnesses and a number of documents extracted from the London Committee which for the first time laid bare the structure of the Company and its trade. The names of shareholders, the value of imports and exports, the standard of trade with the Indians, the position of the Bay posts, and instructions to factors, were all published. The figures showed that the gigantic profits attributed to the Company by Dobbs were a myth. Over the previous ten years profits had averaged about 30 per cent on an annual outlay of £27,000, and only once in that period had a dividend of more than 10 per cent been declared. If the Company's privileges presented a tempting target to outside interests it was because of the potential rather than actual trade of Hudson Bay and its hinterland.

It was to this issue that the House of Commons finally turned in May 1749, and in particular to the question of how effectively the Company was upholding national interests in the face of French rivalry and in the light of its reluctance to explore or expand inland. Here the Company was vulnerable, but its opponents with their forecast of a tenfold increase in the fur trade 'in a very short time', and of a limitless increase of settlement, had weakened



Thomas Knapp of Richmond, Governor of the Hudson's Bay Company, 1746-1750.

their case by loud exaggeration. The Company's servants doggedly insisted that cost, difficulties of terrain, and transportation problems, ruled out any large-scale movement inland. It is true that in 1743 Henley House had been established about 160 miles upstream from Albany on the initiative of Joseph Isbister, but as an outpost to protect Albany's trade from the French—'a garison on ye fruntter', as he put it—rather than as a means of tapping new trading areas. Since it was twice attacked and pillaged by Indians, in 1754 and 1759, its short history tended to confirm fears among Company servants about inland ventures. The future was to show that expansion into the interior was not quite the fearsome prospect imagined by the old hands at the Bayside posts, but their evidence helped to defeat by two to one a parliamentary motion to put to legal trial the Company's right to an exclusive trade.

As the reverberations of the crisis died away, the Company faced a future in which it could no longer rely on obscurity for protection. Published opinion remained generally unfavourable, and in 1752 appeared the first book which reflected direct experience of the Company's service, *An Account of Six Years Residence in Hudson's-Bay* by Joseph Robson. With its stories of oppressive behaviour by the Company factors in the Bay, details of inefficiency in the construction of the absurd stone fortress at Churchill, and exposure of commercial practices, the book was a powerful indictment. In one cutting remark it summarized the case of the critics: 'The Company have for eighty years slept at the edge of a frozen sea'. Later research has shown that Dobbs wrote part of the book, and that its publication was intended by him to 'further expose the management of the Company'. How far the Company's more energetic attitude to exploration and expansion after 1750 was a response to the criticisms of Dobbs, Robson and its other opponents is difficult to say. Certainly it showed considerable sensitivity to outside interest in particular parts of its domains. The questions asked by the Parliamentary Committee about Labrador, and the attempts by London merchants in 1752 to obtain a grant to trade there, led the Company to intensify its existing efforts to map and exploit that region. Coastal expeditions along the East Main produced the first continuous if crude surveys of that shoreline, and resulted in a new post at Richmond Gulf near the country of the elusive Naskapi Indians. On the opposite side of the Bay the Company sent sloops along the coast north from Churchill to seek trade with the Eskimos, little known and much feared, and to complete the surveys of the Middleton and Moor expeditions. These areas, however, were marginal to the Company's main trading operations, and the most significant explorations in the post-inquiry period were mounted from York.

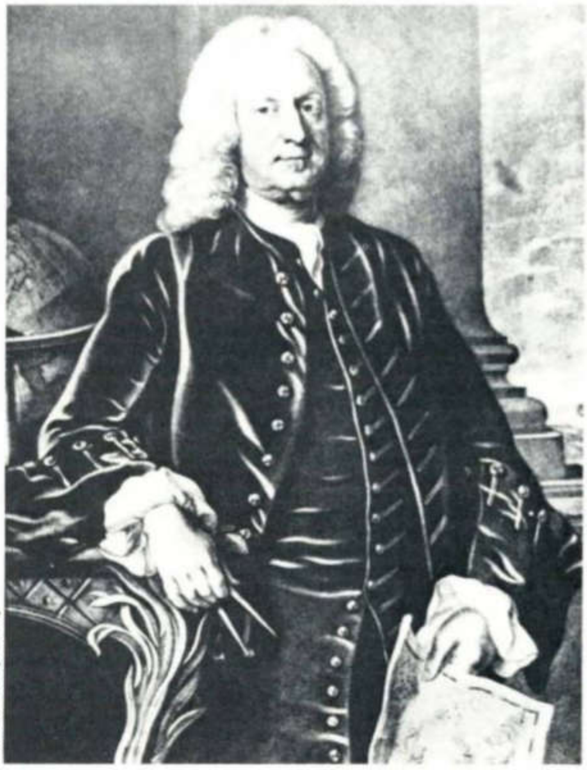
The crisis in England had occurred at a time when French movements in the hinterland of the Bay, although still distant, were having serious effects on the Company's trade. Until about 1730 the competition between the Company posts and the French was noticeable only at the Bottom of the Bay, but in the 1730s and 1740s the threat moved steadily westward as the Sieur de la Vérendrye and his sons thrust beyond the Great Lakes, past Lake Winnipeg and onto the Lower Saskatchewan. Here was a crucial area of the fur trade—'the rendezvous', as the French put it, 'every spring of the Crees of the Mountains, Prairies and Rivers to deliberate as to what they shall do—go and trade with the French or with the English.' By 1753 the line of French posts stretched past The Pas as far west as Fort La Corne near the Forks of the Saskatchewan, and lay across the canoe routes down to Hudson Bay. Most immediately threatened was York, which engrossed about half of the Bayside trade at this time, and there James Isham heard with increasing alarm the reports of French activities inland, and 'what is the most Concer'n is to see us sitt quiet & unconcern'd'. He argued not simply for increased efforts to retain the Company's existing Indian traders but for a more ambitious attempt to draw in the distant 'Archithinues', the Blackfoot of the prairies, who from all reports had 'great plenty of the best and finest of furs'.

Not until the 1750s did the London Committee show interest in Isham's proposals. By then York's trade figures were falling, and Robson's book had publicized the problem worrying Isham:

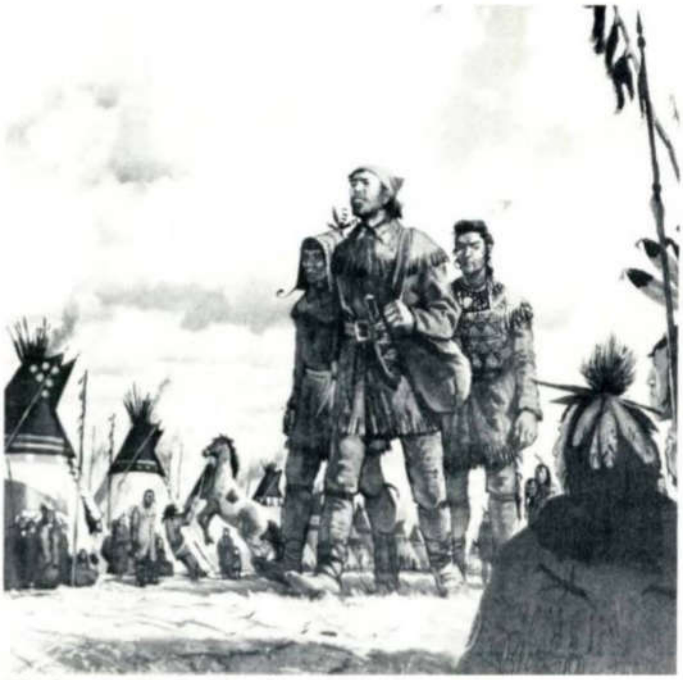
> It is universally believed among the servants, that the French travel many hundred miles over land from Canada to the heads of our rivers in the Bay, and that they have erected huts and settled a considerable factory upon a lake at the head of Nelson-river; trading with these natives for the lightest and most valuable furs.

In 1753 the Committee authorized Isham's project, and the next year that 'bold, enterprizing' servant, Anthony Henday, set out from York on the second major journey into the interior by a Hudson's Bay man. His explorations exceeded Kelsey's both in extent and commercial significance, though his objectives and method of travelling were the same. From York he accompanied the returning Cree along their canoe route onto the Saskatchewan, and then travelled across country with them until they reached the great camp of the horsed Archithinue or Atsina Indians somewhere north of Calgary. Through an interpreter Henday tried to persuade the 'Great Leader' to send his men to the Bay to trade, but the insistent reply was that his people rode horses rather than paddled canoes, and lived off buffalo.

Arthur Dobbs.



Duke University Library

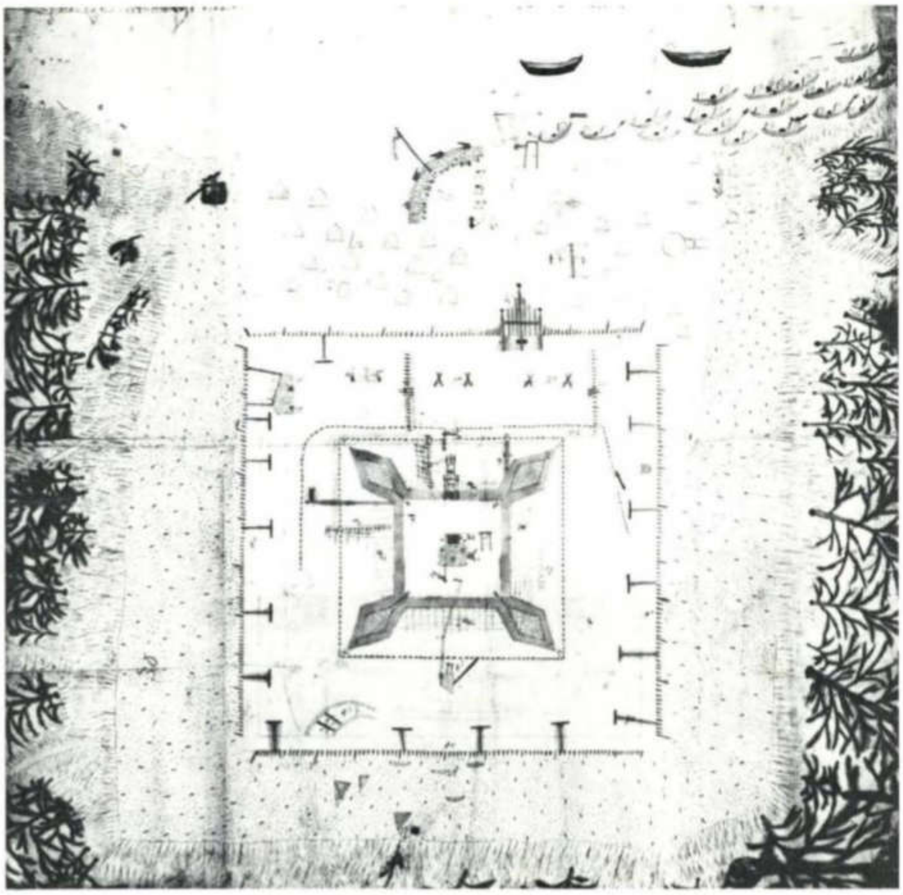


'Henday enters the Blackfoot Camp, 1754'. From a painting by Franklin Arbuckle, R.C.A., for the Hudson's Bay Company.

During his winter wanderings Henday discovered that his Cree companions were middlemen who traded beaver and wolves from the Atsina and Assiniboine, and were unenthusiastic about Henday's mission—'for if the Archithinues and Aseenepoets could be brought down to trade, the others [Cree] then would be obliged to trap their own furs, which at present two thirds of them does not.' On the return journey to York in 1755 with a fleet of sixty or more laden canoes, Henday had to run the gauntlet of the French posts on the Lower Saskatchewan, which traded many of the finest furs from the Cree.

Henday had not only seen the workings of the complex and far-flung Indian trade of the interior, but had also witnessed the way in which the French were creaming off the best of the trade. His experiences provided strong arguments for a rethinking of Company policy, but for reasons which are still not clear the copy of Henday's journal sent home to the Committee contained misleading assertions about the willingness of the Blackfoot to come down to the Bay to trade, and omitted any mention of the loss of furs to the French posts. The Committee acknowledged the value of his venture, and encouraged Isham to organize other inland probes which probably helped to counteract the pressure of the French traders on the Lower Saskatchewan. But further than this the Committee was not prepared to go, and certainly not as far as establishing inland settlements. Isham died in 1761, and by then the situation in the interior was changing dramatically. The conquest of Canada in 1759-60 led to an abandonment of the western posts by the French, and as the Seven Years' War drew to a close the fur trade of an immense area stretching as far as the Rockies seemed about to fall into the Company's hands.◆

James Isham's plan of York Fort, c.1750, showing a fleet of canoes arriving to trade.



III. LIFE BY THE BAY

DURING THE FIRST CENTURY of the Company's existence its servants developed a settled and, in many ways, unique lifestyle at their Bayside posts. In terms of survival in an alien environment the Company garrisons compare well with European traders in other parts of the world: for example, with factors on the slave coasts of West Africa, or with East India Company servants on station, whose life expectancy was notoriously short. A local parallel would be with the Canadian *coureurs de bois* who as individuals or in small parties survived and traded in the wilderness by adopting the methods of its Indian inhabitants. The Hudson's Bay Company garrisons offer a pattern of group survival by, on the whole, unremarkable men, which evolved during the first decades of trade in the Bay and remained little changed until the move inland in the late eighteenth century. The garrisons of the main factories at York, Albany, Churchill and Moose, together with the outpost at Eastmain, and the two later ones of Henley House and Severn, amounted to less than two hundred men. On them rested the fortunes of the Company, and Robson's phrases about the sleep by the frozen sea did less than justice to the hardihood and adaptability of this handful of men.

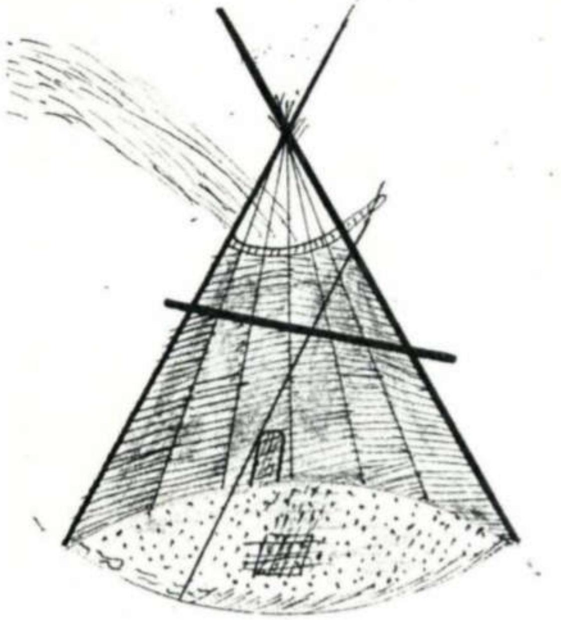
With the exception of the stone fortress at Churchill, the posts conformed to a standard defensive type, represented by Albany during the French wars when for some years it was the Company's only permanent establishment. It consisted of two wooden buildings of two storeys built of horizontal logs. They were protected by four flankers or bastions mounting cannon and joined by a palisade of 'thick stakes strongly joined together, and capped by a plank garnished with iron points'. The plan of York Fort drawn by James Isham around 1750 shows a similar defensive arrangement—a wooden fort with four bastions surrounded by an outer stockade pierced by a single gate. Even the small posts of Severn and Henley each had their four bastions and stockade, so that the latter, it was said, 'looks like a little Castle'. They were the simple, well-tried North American wilderness fortifications, though in peacetime that function became blurred and half-forgotten. At York, by 1770, the area between the main building and the outer stockade was cluttered with a miscellany of outbuildings—two kitchens, workshops for the cooper, smith and carpenter, not to mention four huge piles of wood sufficient to burn the factory to the ground if set alight. Within the posts, too, the garrisons had a far from military aspect. Although every servant could use small arms, and there was occasional practice firing of the 'great cannon', the garrisons included no professional fighting men. Sufficiently imposing to overawe the Indians, the factories and their armaments were in no condition to repel an attack by regular European forces, as the events of 1782 were to show.

If the physical outline of the factories followed a standard form, so did the composition of the garrisons. The larger posts had several 'officers': the chief factor, his second, the surgeon and sloopmaster. They also carried a nucleus of specialist tradesmen: at least one armourer, blacksmith, shipwright, carpenter, cooper, tailor, accountant and (at Churchill for some of this period) mason and harpooner. The rest of the servants were either labourers or seamen. All of them, from factor down to the rawest recruit, had a contract with the Company, usually running from three to five years. This document was, on the face of it, a one-sided affair which imposed a number of duties and obligations on the servant and none on the Company. The servant contracted to serve the Company for a specific number of years, to obey all commands of his superiors, to defend the Company's property 'with the utmost hazard and peril of my life', and to abstain from private trade—all under threat of dismissal and total loss of wages. The severity of these conditions was more apparent than real, since servants were sent home before their time only in cases of the grossest misbehaviour. The plain fact of the situation was that because of the difficulty of communications between England and the Bay, the Company was dependent on its servants in the Bay staying for a fixed number of years known well in advance, and buttressed by as many safeguards as it could devise.

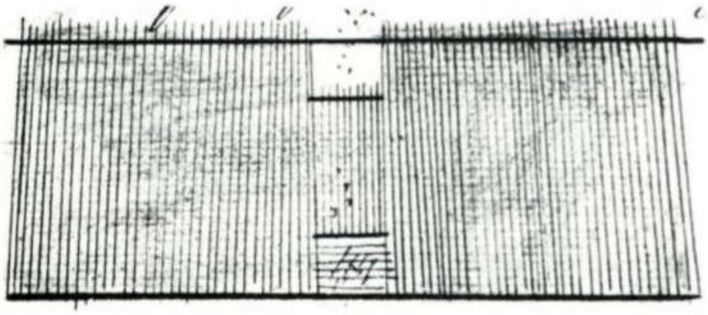
Until 1770, salaries varied from a minimum of £6 to £10 a year for newly engaged labourers to a maximum of £100 for chief at one of the main posts. Tradesmen earned between £20 and £36 a year. The signing of a further contract by a satisfactory servant was accompanied by a rise in wages, while extraordinary services might be rewarded by the payment of a bonus. This could range from £5 given for the dangerous job of blowing up rocks to the £20 awarded to Henday for his inland journey of 1754-5 (since he was employed only as labourer and netmaker this represented two years' wages), or the sum of £180 granted Captain William Coats in 1750-1 for his surveys on the Eastmain coast. All salaries were held by the Company in London; by arrangement, the wife or dependent relative of a servant could draw on them, or the Company would invest them without charge in public securities. At the posts, the men were allowed to buy goods from the Company warehouse up to one-third of their salaries. Within the apparently rigid confines of this system, the personal finances of the servants varied from some who managed not to save a pound (John Hughes at York, who served as a labourer from 1724 to 1772, a remarkable span, was one such) to those who took advantage of the fact that their basic living expenses were met to save most of their salary. So at the other extreme from Hughes was Henday, who when he retired in 1762 had saved almost £113 of his total earnings of £120 with the Company.

Veteran or novice, skilled tradesman or general labourer, the men who made up the Bayside garrisons experienced a similar pattern of existence. New arrivals or those returning on a fresh contract reached their destination in the Bay during the late summer after a voyage of around ten weeks. There were usually three ships: one for Churchill, another for York, and a third which called at both Albany and Moose. Caught up in the bustle of 'ship-time' those destined for the factories would scarcely have found their land legs before the ship, its captain anxious to get clear of Bay and Strait before the ice closed in, was gone with its cargo of furs and perhaps a dozen time-expired servants as passengers. During the ship's brief stay a great assortment of trading goods, stores and provisions had to be unloaded and checked. They are meticulously recorded in the oldest factory journal to survive, that of Albany in 1705-6, which shows that the trade goods varied from the familiar essentials of the fur trade—guns, powder, kettles, tobacco, brandy—to the exotic and decorative such as ostrich feathers and hawks' bells. This was not a random or whimsical collection, but one based on experience of Indian trading, though sometimes the London Committee would experiment with a few novel items or send an approximation of the factor's list rather than his exact request. Even longer was the list of stores. Together with the vast quantities of food and essential supplies of ammunition, tools and the like were items which seem trivial—sealing wax, a salt cellar, a flag, table napkins—but whose inclusion is a reminder of the dependence of the garrison on this annual cargo. A Company post was as self-contained, and in many ways as isolated, as a ship on a long sea voyage. The factor was aware that what he held in his warehouse, supplemented by the resources of the country, had to last his garrison and its dependent Indians for at least twelve months. If the next ship was wrecked, or lost its passage, as occasionally happened, then that period would stretch to two years. The drawing up of inventories and requisitions were time-consuming but vital jobs for the factor and his clerk. An error or omission could leave him short of some essential commodity; too large a demand in his yearly letter home would bring down on him the wrath of the economy-conscious London Committee.

The departure of the ship in late August or September

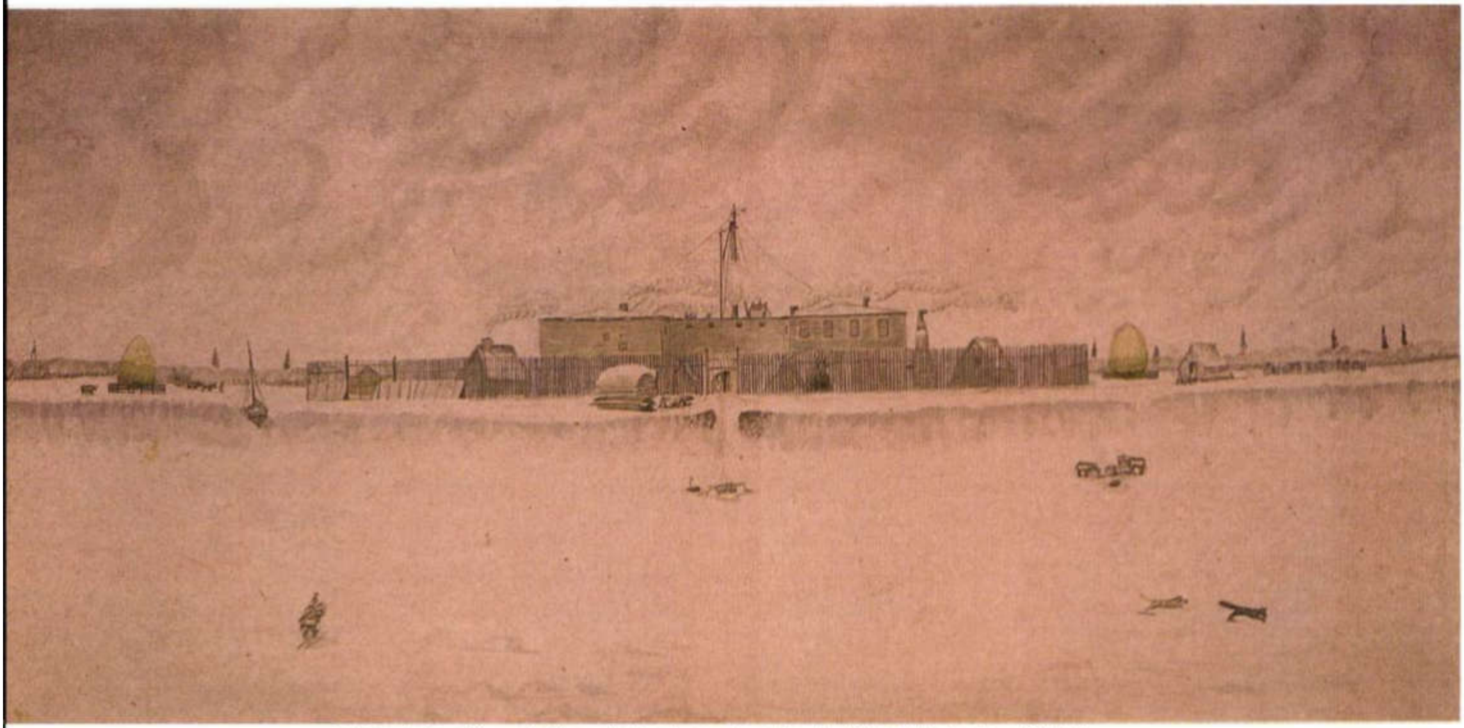


An Indian tent of 'Drest Deer skins, or Drest moose skins', and below, the log tent—'Reckon'd much warmer'—made by the English. From James Isham's 'Observations on Hudsons Bay', 1743.



marked more than the end of the trading year. It was followed by the onset of winter, and until the arrival of the inland Indians with their furs after the rivers broke up the following spring the garrison's main preoccupation was to keep warm and healthy. Their activities were dominated in general terms by the climate; in detail by the weather from day to day. Given this, it is surprising that little in the way of meteorological observations was attempted until the 1770s when for the first time instruments were made available so that daily entries of thermometer readings, wind directions and atmospheric pressure could be recorded at some of the posts. Before that, the post journals gave their weather information in generalized, not to say laconic, terms—'brave, clear weather', 'blustering, cold', 'pretty sharp'. At Churchill, most northerly and exposed of the posts, there are more detailed notes on the weather in the early 1740s. Christopher Middleton wintered there in 1741-2 while in command of his naval discovery expedition, while the factor was James Isham, whose *Observations on Hudsons Bay* were written in 1743. Middleton's journal shows that before the end of September 1741 temperatures were as low as the great frost in England two years earlier. On 11 October the celebrations of George II's birthday were hindered when 'the Wine, with which the Officers drank the aforesaid Healths, and which was good port wine, froze in the Glass as soon as pour'd out of the Bottle.' By the end of the month the snow was ten or twelve feet deep in places, and even in Middleton's room, with its stove, and red-hot shot hanging at the shuttered windows, liquids froze solid. Isham in turn described how his men used axes to hack away ice six or eight inches thick from the inside walls. At York and Severn, Andrew Graham later kept regular 'Meteorological Remarks' and recorded 63 °F. below freezing 'oftentimes' (as well as summer temperatures up to 98 °F.). The more southerly posts at Albany and Moose escaped some of the severity of Churchill's climate, but the wooden buildings, often put up with unseasoned timber, brought their own problems. Caulking was as common an occupation for the Company servants as for sailors at sea, and even so was of limited value. Joseph Robson described how at York the logs shrank so that 'the water beats between the logs, keeping the timber continually damp; and in winter the white frost gets through, which being thawed by the heat of the stoves, has the same effect.'

In such an environment three considerations were crucial to the men's health: dress, diet and activity. The first was the least of a factor's worries. The invaluable Isham has left us a detailed description of the appearance of a Company servant during the eight months or so of cold weather—clothed in multiple layers of flannel, duffle and deer leather, with a long beaver coat and a beaver cape overall, and so venturing out, 'a bag upon the back, with a tin pott and hatchet by the side, with a Beard as Long as Captain Teache's, and a face as black as any Chimnly Sweepers—and this is the figure we make appearing more Like Beasts than men'. From this it is clear that many of the garrison did not spend the winter indoors. The tradesmen, by the nature of their occupations, inevitably spent most of their time within the confines of the fort where there were always jobs to be done: sorting and repairing the trade goods, bundling the furs, maintaining the structure of the fort. The labourers, joined on occasion by some of the tradesmen and officers, were outdoors for much of the winter—wooding, trapping, hunting, fishing. Wooding in particular, to meet the demands for building timber and firewood, took place ever further from the factory. At Churchill the timber was felled in the winter and rafted down to the fort in the summer; by Isham's time there



'A South East View of Albany Factory', a water-colour by William Richards, c.1804-11.

were two colossal piles of wood, a hundred and sixty yards round and about twenty feet high. For these activities groups of servants spent weeks at a time away from the factory in skin tents or, more usually, log tents. Later in the century, the working parties seem to have used more conventional and portable shelters: David Thompson noted in the 1780s that :'Each party has a canvas tent, like a soldier's bell tent with the top cut off to let the smoke out.'

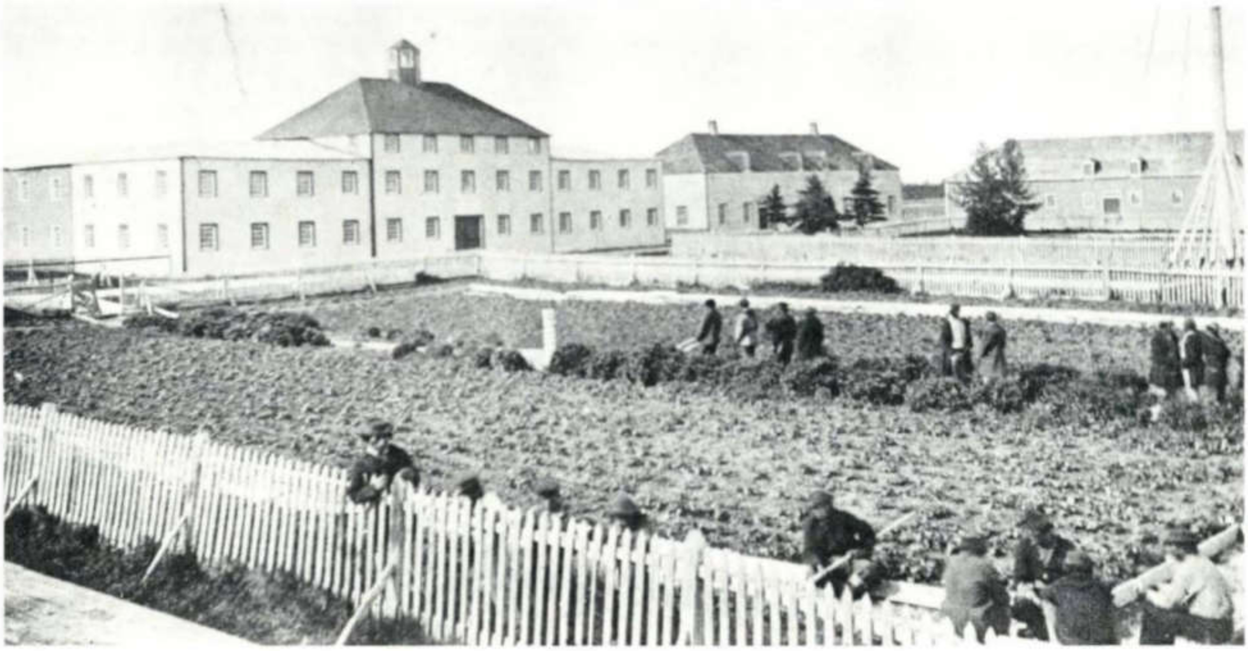
The nature of the hunting varied according to season. Geese were shot in great numbers in the fall and spring, some eaten fresh, the rest salted down, as was much of the fish that was caught. Ptarmigan were netted during the winter (as many as ten thousand at the little post of Severn alone in some years), and rabbits trapped. The variety of ingenious methods used to catch rabbits was described by Isham, who was no mean hunter himself, with a bag of a hundred rabbits snared in a night. The rations served out to the men consisted of provisions from England—salt pork and beef, flour, suet, peas, bacon, cheese, butter and oatmeal—together with geese, ptarmigan, venison, rabbit and fish. To the modern eye the amounts seem gargantuan. On Christmas Day, 1705, each mess of four men at Albany was given twenty pounds of flour, two pounds of bacon, eight pints of oatmeal, two pints of rice, two pounds of raisins, half-pound of currants, eight pounds of mutton, three fresh and two salted geese, one 'piece' of salt beef, twelve partridges, four pounds of biscuit bread, two pounds of cheese, one-and-half pounds of butter, three pounds of suet, and sixty fish. This was, the factor conceded, rather more than usual, but it was matched by the list given by Andrew Graham a half-century later of daily rations. Graham claimed that 'the major part of the people cannot use all their allowance, but are forced to give it to the natives, it being more than they can eat. The Orkney servants yearly send home to their wives and children flour that they store up.' If true, this was a bizarre state of affairs, since this flour had been expensively shipped from England to the Bay only the previous year.

A small but essential addition to this heavy protein diet were the garden greens grown at the factories in the summer. By now, the men had shed their heavy furs, and for about four months wore European clothes. But if the summer meant relief from the cold and darkness, it also brought the insects, an ever-present, goading accompaniment in the warmer weather for men who had no protection of mesh or repellent—only train oil for the horses and cattle, and thick clouds of tobacco smoke for the humans. Insects are rarely mentioned in the journals: Hearne must have suffered from them in his attempts to reach the Coppermine River, but contents himself with a solitary comment on the night of 13 July 1771, 'almost impossible to sleep for the muskettoes'. Isham more than made up for the silent stoicism of his colleagues: 'sand fly's are so thick a man Can not see his way for them, Even' if a man open's his mouth he is Lyable to be Joack't'. But these, he insisted, were minor pests compared with the mosquitoes, whose bites made a man's head swell to the size of a barrel. A bushel of mosquitoes had to be swept off a hunter as he emerged from the woods, and they had to be shovelled away from the doors before the men could get in. Graham was rather less dramatic, but he agreed that after rain mosquitoes swarmed in such numbers that 'a person cannot hold up his face, and often the people have been obliged to leave off work.'

Some of this work would be in the kitchen gardens. Almost from the beginning, the Company had been anxious to encourage the establishment of gardens at the Bayside posts. Not only were fresh vegetables and herbs of obvious medicinal value, but they would lessen the heavy bill for imported supplies. Seeds were sent out in most years—lettuce, turnips, radish, cabbage, mustard, sorrel among them—but the effort to establish gardens, given the climate, terrain, and the ignorance or indifference of some of the servants, was an uphill struggle. In 1693 the Committee sent to Albany 'a printed Booke' with directions on sowing and cultivating, but in 1705 despite the presence of Edward Williams, 'Gardner', at the factory, instructions of the most elementary nature had to be sent out from London: 'Lett one part Lye fallow, then dig it up Two or three times in the somer, & dung it & mix it well with the mould, but be shure Lett your dung Lye in A heape & be well Rotted, you must also observe not to sow Two yeare Togeather one sort of graine in one bed, but change them, & then noe question but yr Laboure will be Answered.' During the eighteenth century a few factors showed interest, particularly at the more southerly posts, but even at Moose Richard Staunton responded rather dourly in 1738 to the Company's promptings: 'As for garden seeds and also gardening, I am almost a stranger to, as having spent my youth in your honours' service.' The situation varied from post to post, and from factor to factor. So at Churchill, with the shortest growing season, Graham managed to produce potatoes the size of a hen's egg, and William Wales wrote enthusiastically during his year there in 1768-9 about the radishes, turnip tops, lettuce and dandelions grown in the garden. On the other hand, three years later at York a notice was put up warning that 'whereas within these few years it has been customary to empty urine, brine, water and rubbish in the men's garden, thereby preventing the use formerly made of that ground . . . it is therefore ordered that henceforth this practice be discontinued.'

Despite the erratic course of kitchen gardening, the greens produced were a useful addition to the diet, and may have helped to ward off scurvy. In 1682 colewort and turnips were noted as being 'refreshing to the men, many of them sick of the scurvy' contracted on the outward voyage to the Bay. As Middleton watched his discovery crews sickening in the winter of 1741-2 he wrote, 'In the spring of the year we shall supply them with green herbs—the best remedy known here for scurvy.' There is a striking contrast between Middleton's crews, without fur clothing, huddled together in the old wooden fort at Churchill with a half-pint of brandy a day to keep them warm, living mainly on salt meat—and the Company servants, who spent an arduous winter away from the newly built Prince of Wales's Fort, hunting, wooding and fishing. They returned in April; by then ten of Mid-

The vegetable gardens at York Factory, 1880, after more than a century of cultivation.



dleton's men were dead from scurvy, several had suffered so severely from frostbite that amputation was necessary, and many others were still sick. It was vindication, of a sombre kind, of the Company policy of keeping its servants warmly clothed, well fed, and active out of doors during all but the most severe weather.

This is not to say that there was no illness at the factories. The post journals, however reticent they might be on some matters, are a voluble source of information on the health of the chief factor, his officers, and the men. What they suffered from is not always clear, but the most common complaints mentioned in the journals were gout, rheumatism, hernias and ruptures, venereal disease, stone, and a variety of bronchial or respiratory problems. The surgeons at the larger posts, often men with uncertain or minimal medical training, were supplied with a chest of medicines. Their contents are for the most part a mystery, and although a list of the medicines at Albany in 1730 has survived, the efficacy of the seventy-six different drugs, ointments and salves—few of them used today—is doubtful. Indian herbal remedies were sometimes tried, but without much agreement on their effect. 'Wisgakapucka' or Labrador Tea was supposed to have a wide range of medicinal applications, but Hearne tersely remarked that he 'could never think it had the least medical quality'. To generalize about the health of the Company servants is difficult. What one can say is that it almost certainly compared favourably with that of working men in England, that fatal or epidemic illnesses were comparatively rare, and that many of the Company employees whose dates of birth and death are known lived to an advanced age.

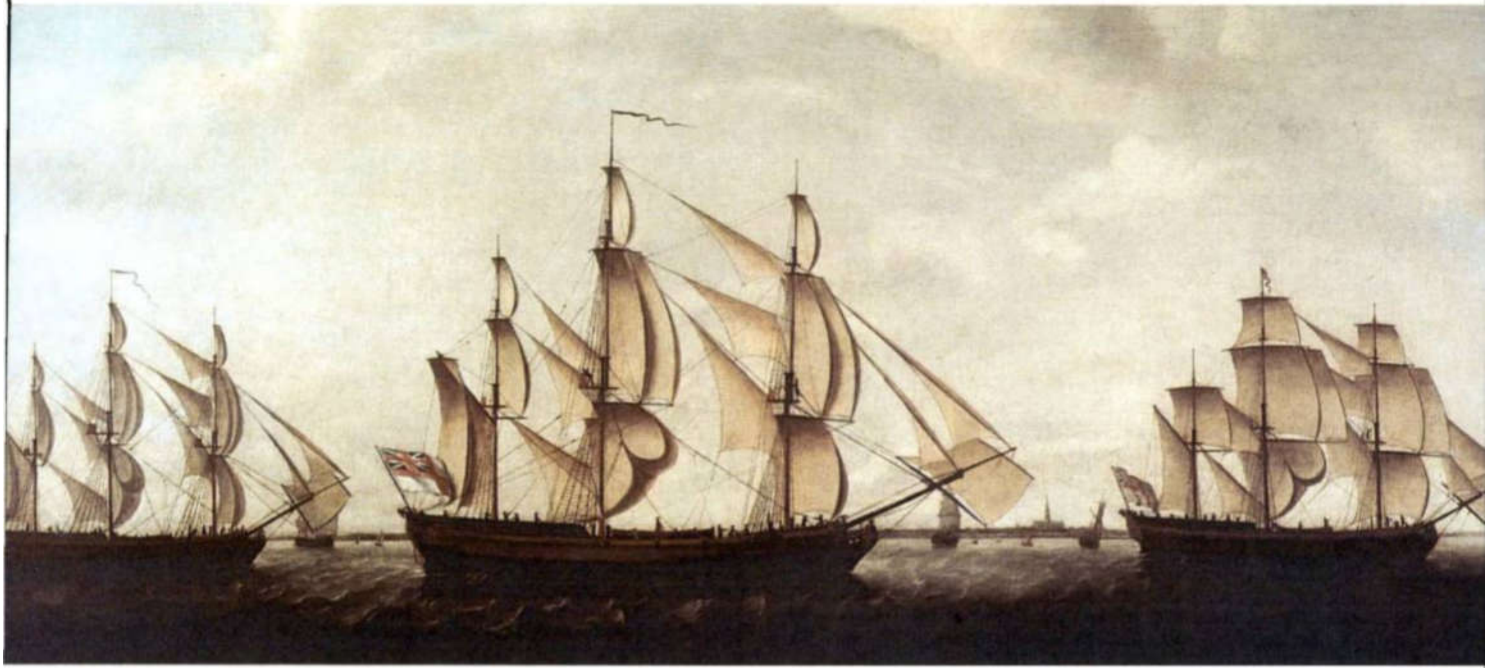
At the larger posts at least the daily routine was fixed by official instruction and established routine. That at Churchill was probably typical:

> The servants are rung out and in to duty by a bell. They work from 6 to 6 in summer, and from 9 to 2 in winter, being allowed an hour to breakfast, and the same time to dinner. A regular watch is kept in the night by two men, three hours at a time . . . the first watch seeing all fires and lights out by 9 o'clock, and the morning watch lights the fire and calls the men up. In the summer a strict look-out is kept on the ramparts or house top, and when a ship, vessel of any kind, or canoe is seen, they acquaint the Chief and officers directly.

The bell was as essential an item of equipment as it was on a ship: to signal the change of watch, to call the men in, to sound the alarm. When the bell at Churchill was sent home for repair in 1721 but was returned split, the factor wrote home with some agitation about the pressing necessity for a new one. Even the outposts seem to have had a bell, for when Henley was burnt down in 1782 it was noted that 'nothing was saved, even the Bell run into a shapeless mass'.

There are implications in all this of 'garrisons' living under military-style discipline, with the Governor and Committee in London sending instructions to their 'officers' in the Bay which were rigorously observed. In some cases at least, this was far from so. Life at the Bayside posts as seen through the documents has a two-dimensional quality. There is the official dimension, represented by the exchange of letters between London and the Bay each year, and the careful, if often non-committal, journals kept as a daily record at the posts. But there is another dimension, for the documents also provide glimpses of an underworld of illicit activity, often suspected by the London Committee, but difficult to prove or quantify. Three of the most insistent Company prohibitions concerned relations with Indian women, private trading, and excessive consumption of alcohol. There is evidence to suggest that these prohibitions were partly, perhaps largely, ignored or evaded, and in the case of private trading the evasion was sufficiently serious at times to threaten the stability and profitability of the Company.

'Private trading' covered a multitude of activities. Some were tolerated by the Company despite the Draconian wording of the contract with its servants; but others were of major and damaging importance. Throughout this period there was a continual seepage of 'private trappings', that is, furs trapped by the servants during the winter. The dilemma which confronted the Company on this issue was apparent during the French wars at the turn of the century. To allow men to trap furs on their own behalf was an incentive to keep them in the service at a difficult time; on the other hand the small furs such as marten which they tended to trap were more in demand on the London market than beaver. In 1700 the first of a series of compromises was reached which held good in one form or another for seventy years. If furs trapped by individual servants were handed in to the factory's warehouse by the end of February (that is, before the main trading season began), the Company would ship them home for sale with its own furs, and remit half the sale price to the trapper. The concession once made, difficulties multiplied. There was a problem in establishing whether the furs sold under this arrangement were indeed of the men's 'owne Catching', or whether they had not been traded from the Indians (with the Company's goods). Furthermore, there was a standing temptation for the men to send their furs, however acquired, home on their own account, and to pocket the whole of the proceeds. The more responsible the position a servant held, the greater the temptation and opportunity. So, in 1721 the warehouse keeper at Churchill was accused of using Company brandy and other goods to barter furs from the Indians for his personal account, and of then exchanging poor marten skins obtained in this way for prime marten held on the Company's account in his warehouse—a double fraud! Nor did the factors hold



Hudson's Bay Company ships in the Thames. An oil by Francis Holman, 1771. There were usually three: one for Churchill, another for York, and a third which called at both Albany and Moose.

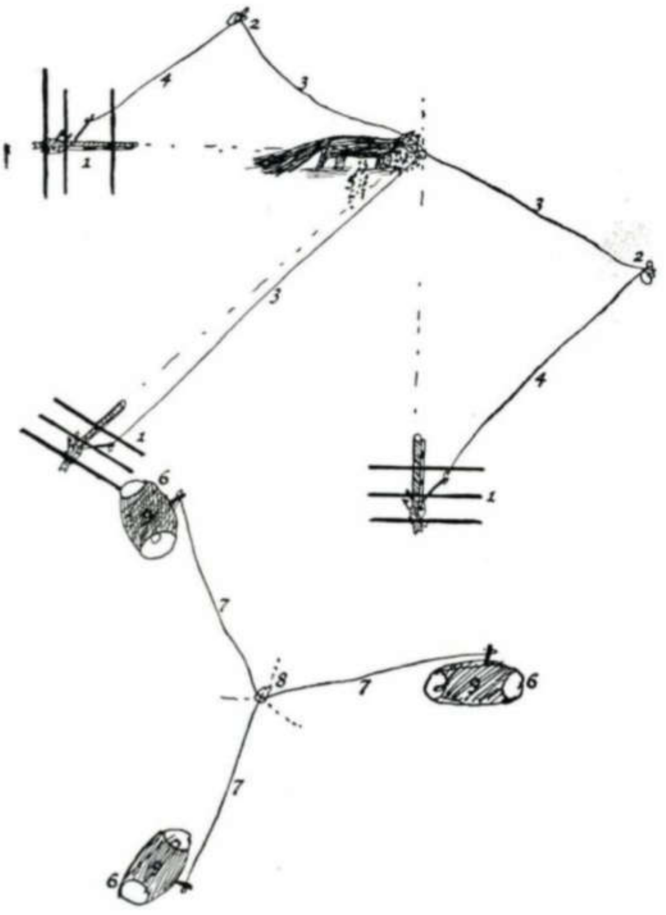
aloof from this deliberate confusing of personal and Company accounts. In a letter to Ferdinand Jacobs at Churchill in 1750 the London Committee made it clear that it suspected 'from the large quantity of Furrs & Skins sent home on your account . . . you include therein those given by the Leading Indians in return for Presents made them of our goods.'

The main security which the Company had against more blatant forms of private trading or smuggling was that all furs had to be shipped out on one or other of its regular supply vessels. The ships' captains were therefore key figures, and together with conscientious and observant factors could reduce private trading to negligible proportions. But what should have been a protective bulwark proved to be a gaping loophole, for the large-scale private trading which seems to have developed by the middle decades of the century was carried on with the active connivance of some at least of the captains and often of the factors as well. The Company records are full of accusation, queries and protestations of innocence on the subject. Some of the most prominent figures in the Company's early history—Anthony Beale, James Knight, Henry Kelsey among them—were suspected at one time or another of private trading. Men were sent home by the factors for furtive trading with the Indians, for stealing furs out of the warehouse, for trying to conceal their winter's hunt. Some of the servants obviously had larger ambitions. In 1727 Benjamin Harding was dismissed from Albany, the London Committee having discovered him 'writing to his friends for large quantities of goods to carry on a private trade with the natives'. But the more serious accusations aimed at the factors were usually met with blank denials.

Reliable information on private trading usually came to the Company by chance. The burning down of Moose in the winter of 1735-6 led to Richard Staunton's unexpected posting there, and in his report home about the lamentable state of affairs at the factory he pointed an accusing finger at the ships' captains: 'as for brandy, according to the best information I have had there has been some hundreds of gallons landed at this place as well as at others in one year contrary to your punctual orders.' Even so, a year later Robert Pilgrim was caught smuggling furs home from Moose on the Company ship, and Staunton was sternly reprimanded: 'You Could not be Ignorant but that Pilgrim was Possessed of some furrs and not being Packt up among ye other Servants furrs he must of Course put them Clandestinly on board.' One of the captains involved, William Coats, was also suspected of supplying brandy for illicit trading to the garrison at Albany, where according to Joseph Isbister in 1742 Coats 'can in one day oversett a reformation of 2 years'. Coats was presumably cleared of the charge, for in 1744 he was awarded a bonus for his 'Services and fidelity for many years past'. In the winter of 1750-1 his luck ran out when Robert Pilgrim, who had not only been retained in the Company's service after the episode at Moose but had been promoted to Chief Factor, died suddenly in London. On dealing with Pilgrim's papers, his executors informed the Governor of the Company 'of a Clandestine Trade carried on by Captain William Coats; and had furnished him with several Letters, Accounts, and other Papers relating thereto.' Coats was dismissed on the spot, and with this evidence of captain and factor conspiring together it was clear that the Company's elaborate system of checks and counter-checks was based on an illusion of loyalty.

An even more serious case of illicit trading in 1769 finally spurred the Company towards a radical change of policy. When the Company ships reached England that autumn the London Committee found 'manifest proofs of imposition by some of our servants of the superior class and in whom our confidence was placed', and it dismissed one of the ships' captains, John Horner. In a further statement from the Committee which has not received the attention from historians which it merits, the point was made that 'if the very remarkable attempts of private trade which we discovered this last year are permitted to continue, the existence of the Company is in great danger of being overset.' It put an abrupt end to the concessions on private trapping, and sent new and stringent orders to its factors to search the belongings of all servants returning home. In compensation for the financial loss involved in the new policy, the salaries of officers at the posts and on the ships were raised, and they were also granted bounties according to the number of furs traded on the Company's account.

Fear of illicit trading was one reason why the Company had always tried to establish barriers between its garrisons and the Indians. Routine instructions stated that no Indians should be allowed within the factories, and that they should not be 'admitted to prye into any of the Company's affairs'. An apparently innocuous attempt at Albany in the 1720s to teach an Indian boy to read and write led to a crushing reprimand from the London Committee for the officers concerned. Later, the episode was turned against the Company when a witness at the parliamentary investigation of 1749 described how the boy 'wrote a Letter to the Company desiring to come over to be baptized; upon which the Company sent an order to Mr Staunton, the then Governor, to take away his Books, and not let him read any more; upon which the Boy was sent out of the Factory, and died.' This episode, long remembered though it was, was not typical of the state of affairs at the posts. Although a factor at trading time might try to keep the 'upland Indians' on their side of the 'window in the wall' to preserve some sort of order and regularity, it was impractical if not impolitic to hold aloof from the 'Home Indians' who lived near the fort, trapping and hunting for the garrison. The same Richard Staunton pointed out that 'as for the Indians that hunts for us, to keep them constantly out will be a hard thing, if not very detrimental to your interest as in getting fresh provisions and their hunting.'



(1) Is 3 Guns Sett in a triangle form (2) false bait's (3) the Lines cov'd. with snow (4) the Lines not coverd [illegible] & where their is Blocks they run thro (5) the Vermin taking the baite (6) 3 cask's with pistols sett in them 9 (7) the Lines under the Snow (8) the baite.

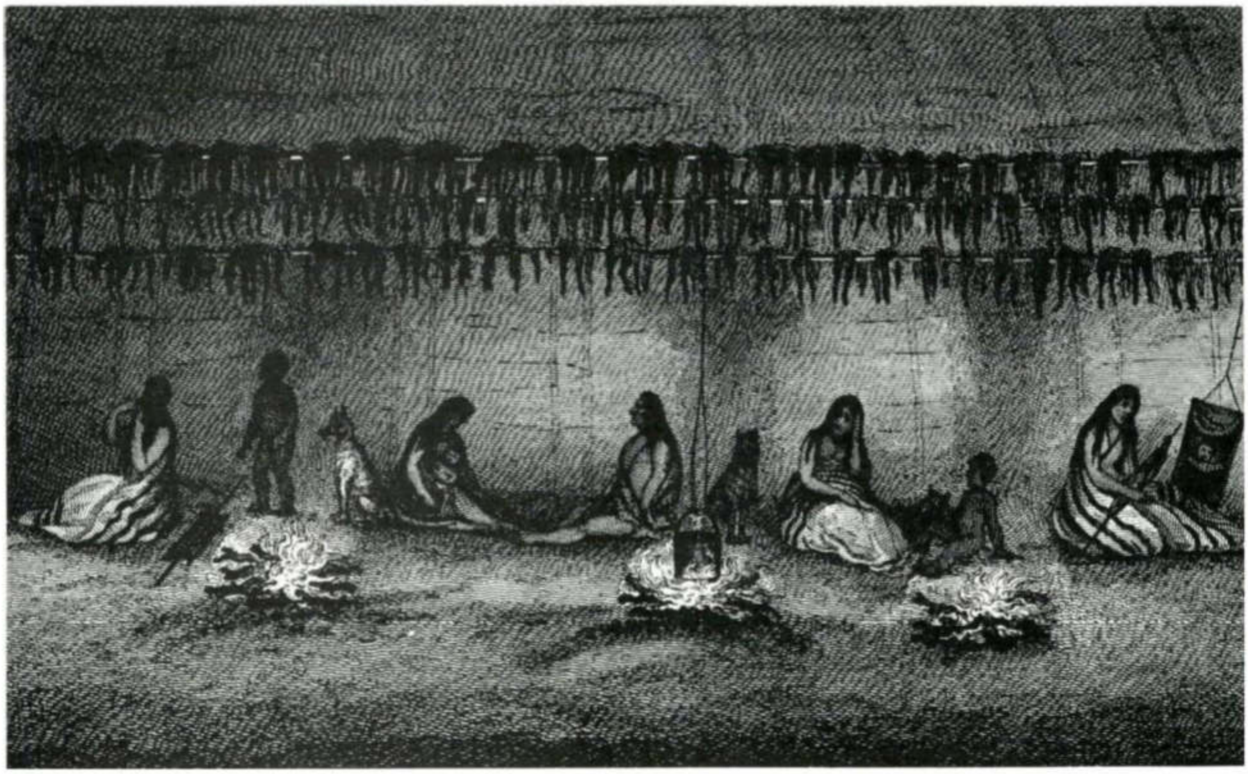
Isham's drawings of fox traps using guns set in a triangle and in casks.

Even less realistic was the Company's attempt to combine a ban on Englishwomen accompanying their husbands to the Bay with a prohibition on relations between the garrisons and Indian women. The London Committee seems for all practical purposes to have exempted its factors from this prohibition as early as the 1730s, when it conceded that Richard Norton at Churchill could keep his Indian woman and family as long as he did not involve the Company in extra expense. There is no doubt that most of the factors, in the words of one of them, 'keeps a bedfellow within the Fort at all times'. What is more difficult to establish is the extent to which other Company servants were permitted relations with Indian women, either of a permanent or casual nature.

There is some evidence to suggest that such relationships were common. Isham, in describing the offspring of these liaisons—'fine Children . . . streight Lim'd, Lively active'—added that they were 'pretty Numerious'. It was Isham who in 1738 told the Company that he did not intend to put into effect at York its offer of free treatment by the surgeons for venereal disease because it would mean 'opening a door for licentiousness and debauchery, when the punishment of a month's pay is taken away.' From Kelsey's inland journey onwards, Company servants had taken Indian women when they ventured away from the posts; and this practice was probably extended when the men spent time 'living out' in their log tents during the winter. It may have been this which Graham had in mind when he noted that 'the officers and all others prefer dwelling abroad in tents during the winter to staying at home, the novelty and amusement over-balancing the inconveniences met with on this service.'

Even inside the posts, some factors clearly allowed their servants the company of Indian women. At Moose, nearest the area of French competition, relations with the Indians were particularly close. In the first decade after the post's establishment in 1730 many of the men took Indian wives, and their families often lived within the factory, drawing Company goods and provisions in return for help with the annual hunts and information about the French. It was a situation far removed from that envisaged by the London Committee, and when in 1741 a new Chief, the 'reformer' James Duffield, arrived at Moose he notified the Company that he had found there 'a nest of free & accepted Masons . . . a Scandalous Society'. His efforts to restore authority over the next three years brought the servants to the edge of rebellion, antagonized the Indians, and earned him scant thanks from the Company, which referred disparagingly to the unfortunate effects of 'Governing with a Rod of Iron'. At Henley in the winter of 1754-5 the massacre of the little garrison took place in an environment where Indians moved in and out of the post at will, and where the Master and four men all kept Indian women 'at Bed and Board' (the Master kept two). The surgeon at Albany had no doubt about the cause of the trouble: 'Women have been the destruction of Your People, Your Goods and Trade'. Sometimes, information on the state of affairs at a factory came from a newly appointed Chief, anxious to impress the London Committee with his zeal. Thus, when Ferdinand Jacobs, who had an Indian family at Churchill, succeeded Isham at York in 1761 he claimed that 'the worst Brothel House in London is Not So Common a Stew as the mens House in this Factory', and brusquely cleared the Indian women off the premises. His successor at Churchill, Moses Norton, also had an Indian family, but it was he who sent home three men in 1769, 'for they made it a common practice to scale the works and go among the natives'.

A group of 'Home' Indians—Crees who lived on the Hayes River and traded into York Factory. Strips of caribou meat hang in the smoke above the fires. From Chappell's 'Voyage to Hudson's Bay', published in 1817.



There were obvious difficulties about a factor with an Indian family enforcing the Company's ban on Indian women, and efforts to do so led to understandable resentment. Disciplinarians such as Jacobs and Norton could reconcile their domestic situation with the firm application of the Company's orders to their subordinates only by insisting on their own privileged position. Certainly, this was in line with the Company's general anxiety to distinguish the 'officers' from the 'men'. Apart from the marked difference in salaries, it was shown in the provision of separate quarters and messing allowances. As Graham noted, 'The Governor's table is always handsomely supplied with provisions, very seldom having less than three dishes; and on particular occasions fourteen or sixteen . . . The officers have wines and French brandy plentifully allowed them; and the men London porter, and British spirit, served out at the discretion of the Chief.' The subordinate officers might well be caught in a position of some awkwardness. Subject to the chief factor, and expected at all times to support his authority, their lot could be difficult and frustrating. They were members of the Council, but the factor was not bound to seek their advice, and although each was required to sign the annual letter home, this was 'perhaps penned only by the Chief, and unread by the others before it is brought out in Council to be signed.' Disputes were frequent. Moses Norton at Churchill was said by Hearne—admittedly not the most reliable witness where Norton was concerned—to show more respect to his dog than to his Second. The structural eccentricities of the stone factory brought further problems: 'The officers' apartments are so small, and amongst the men's, often causes discontents between the Chief and them, so that few of them stays after the expiration of their first contract.'

That there was heavy drinking, even by eighteenth-century standards, is not surprising. During the dark winter months there were long periods of enforced leisure, and how these were spent is rarely documented. There are occasional references to playing cards or draughts (the latter, interestingly, often against Indians, 'such proficients that few Europeans can cope with them'), to home-made musical instruments, and to books and periodicals. A few officers, Isham, Graham and Hutchins in particular, kept notes on the natural history of the region, and collected specimens. But for many, recourse to the bottle was the easiest answer. The monotony of landscape, the limited human company, the dark and the cold, and the ready availability of spirits, all help to explain the factors' complaints about the 'sottish', 'turbulent' behaviour of the servants. In 1682 Governor Nixon pleaded with the Company 'to send me some country lads that are not acquainted with strong drink, that will worke hard . . . and are not debauched by the voluptuousness of the city.' One result of his appeal was the adoption by the Company of an apprenticeship system under which boys signed articles for seven years; among early, and successful, products of the system were Henry Kelsey and Richard Norton. But the old problems remained. When Joseph Myatt reported in 1727 that he had lost three men at Albany through 'excessive hard drinking', he went on to complain that 'the Londoners are so well acquainted with the ways and debaucheries of the town that I even despair ever of reclaiming them, for there is not one labouring man that came over the last year but what are sots to a man.' Nor were the factors immune. When Rowland Waggoner died at Albany in 1740 his successor noted that Waggoner was 'a Weak Man & Drink'd hard, the thing that has been ye Death of all ye Govrs. that hath Departed the World hear.'

The patent unsuitability for hard work of many of those prepared to sign on for Hudson Bay was one reason for the Company's decision to hire, first, Lowland Scots, and then Orkneymen, in increasing numbers. If dour and clannish, the latter were hardier and more reliable than the general run of urbanized labourers, and by the 1730s most of the Company's labourers and some of the craftsmen came from the Orkneys—a regular port of call for the Company ships on their voyage from the Thames 'north about' to the Bay. Sometimes, regional groupings of servants could lead to trouble. Moose in its early days seems to have had a high proportion of men from the northeast, and the fact that several of the ships' captains also came from that part of England helped brandy smuggling. The burning of the post at Christmas 1735 was attributed to 'drunkenness and debauchery'. Brandy brought in by the ships' captains as a lubricant for illicit trade could make nonsense of the Company's restrictions on spirits, by which no servant was allowed to buy more than six gallons a year of 'brandy' (in fact, a raw, gin-type spirit). At the factories, large amounts of spirits were kept for the Indian trade—2,474 gallons at York in 1766, for example. If the factor, or his warehouse keeper, were less than honest then some of this would find its way to the men, often in return for their private trappings. The use of brandy in making gifts to the leading Indians, and the widespread habit of watering it—both practices left to the factor's discretion—made strict accountability impossible. One way or another, Company servants who wanted brandy had both the means and opportunity of obtaining it, and undoubtedly some of the discipline problems at the posts stemmed from drunkenness.

Despite the efforts of the Company and of the factors themselves to give the position of 'Chief' or 'Governor' an aura of status and authority, the fact remains that most of them were of humble origin. They had risen from the ranks. Beale, Kelsey and Norton had been apprentices; McCliesh and Knight shipwrights; Myatt a carpenter; and Graham a sloopmaster's servant. To read Isham, for example, is to be aware of a man of shrewd and independent judgement, but lacking formal education despite his first employment by the Company at the age of sixteen as a 'writer'. Unlike a commissioned officer in the King's service, a Company factor in the eighteenth century often came from the same artisan class as his men. Nor did he have the means of keeping discipline which an army or naval officer possessed: no file of marines, no court-martial procedure, no King's regulations. He was thrust back on the force of his own personality, backed on occasion by his fists, and on the rather remote threat of reporting the delinquent to the Company in the yearly letter, possibly sending him home. A factor was as much a prisoner of his environment as the men. Together they lived in isolation from other Europeans for twelve months, broken only by an exchange of letters with other factors once or twice a year, and ending with the arrival of the supply vessel and sloops from the other posts in August. For the most part the factors ruled by a series of compromises. Conventions and practices developed in the Bay outside the range of knowledge and approval of the distant London Committee. This is not to say that life at the posts was a squalid orgy, with drunken servants forcing Indian women into prostitution, and robbing the Company at every turn. The Company could not have survived if this were so; but it is no more of a caricature than the assumption that the garrisons lived by the letter of the Company's annual instructions. What had evolved was a local and distinctive lifestyle, based on a combination of trading considerations, sexual needs, and the requirements of a harsh physical environment.

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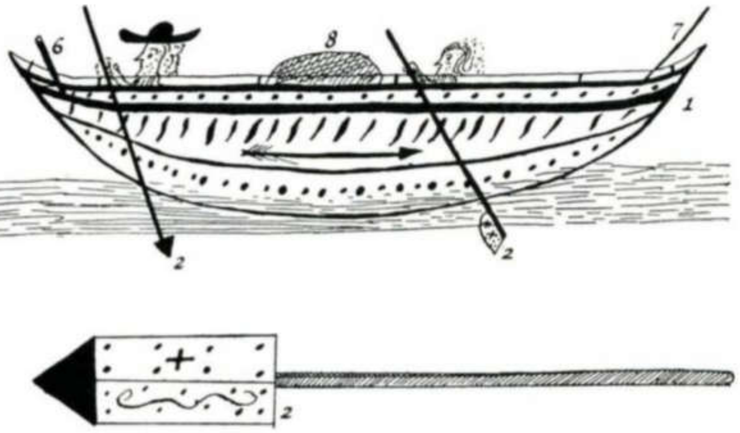


'An Indian Cannoe' and below 'the oar or padle'. From 'Isham's Observations & Notes, 1743-49'.

IV. THE INDIANS AND THE BAY TRADE

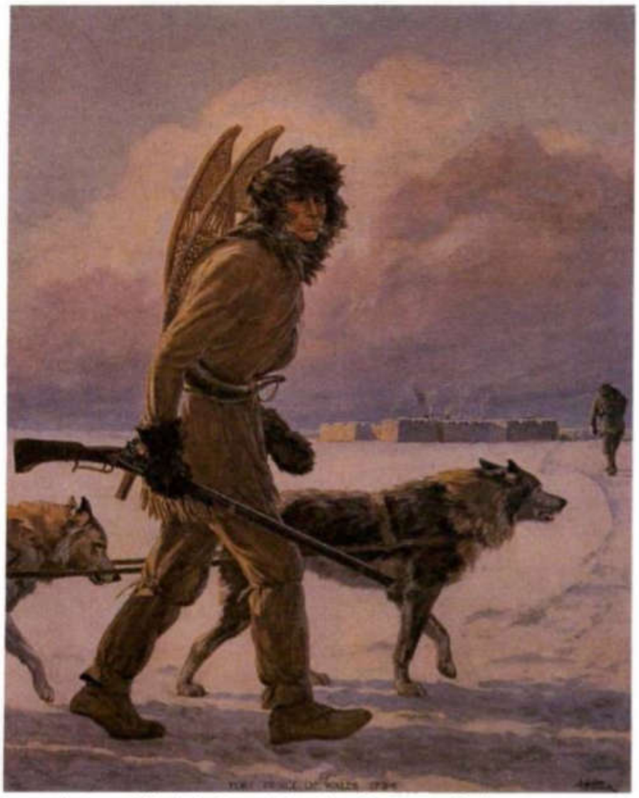
AT THE BAYSIDE POSTS the seasonal movements of human activity quickened as the summer months approached. June and July normally saw the appearance of the inland Indians, and August, the long-awaited arrival of the Company ship. The winter months had been a prolonged prelude to the few crowded weeks in which the main trading operations were conducted. The Company posts were, in effect, the meeting places between the Indians of the interior and the supply ships, and their location was determined more by the navigability of the rivers for canoes than by the convenience of their estuaries for ocean-going ships. Churchill had a good harbour, and Moose a reasonable one below the factory; but at York and Albany the vessels had to lie an awkward distance from the factory—at York in 'Five Fathom Hole' about seven miles out, and at Albany fifteen miles distant in the open roadstead. At the outposts of Severn and Eastmain the harbours were so shoal than even the seventy-ton Company sloops had difficulty in getting in and out. But these rivers ran from deep in the interior and formed the highways for the Indian trade. All except Churchill, that is, for ironically, 'Notwithstanding that it is the boldest river in the Bay for a ship to come to, yet it is so shoal that canoes can but just come down'. So the Chipewyan came overland, carrying their furs on their backs or on pack dogs and dogsleds, and more usually in winter than in summer.

The Company posts tapped the fur regions of the interior through the river systems in a wide arc from Eastmain round the deep gulf of James Bay and along the southwest shores of Hudson Bay proper. The arrival of the English, their ships and permanent posts after 1670 had attracted some of the Cree and Ojibwa of the area between Lake Nipigon and the Abitibi River away from the French, and northward to James Bay. This partial switch in the direction of the Indian fur trade marked the beginning of competition between the two trading systems, the one based on Hudson Bay and Strait, the other on the St Lawrence, which was to continue until the nineteenth century. With the French and English active, parts of the relatively narrow area between the two systems in northern Ontario became trapped out; and although the Hudson's Bay Company retained its James Bay posts, its main trading activity shifted northwest where for the middle decades of the eighteenth century York Factory was to account for almost half the Company's returns. Strategically placed on the lower Nelson drainage basin, York attracted the Western Cree and Assiniboine who stretched away to the southwest beyond the great Saskatchewan River system.

This region lay outside the realm of direct European knowledge, but fragmentary information reached the Bayside factories which indicated something of the effect which the European trading presence was having on distant Indian tribes. In 1682 George Geyer at York reported that the Cree and Assiniboine, armed with muskets, were at war with unknown Indians, 'the poyets' (probably Blackfoot), in an effort to maintain their position as 'the only brokers between all strange Indians and us'. Kelsey's wanderings in the early 1690s provided confirmation of this. He found that the 'Naywatame Poets' would not respond to his promptings that they should open a direct trade with York since the Cree 'struck a new fear into them that they would not venture down'. These were early indications of the development of a middleman trading role among the Cree and Assiniboine, an evolution in which their geographical location and parkland-woodland lifestyle were as important as their possession of firearms. Although groups of Indians from perhaps as far away as the Upper Missouri reached York on occasions before 1720, the journey was a dangerously long one to attempt in one season, whereas the Cree and Assiniboine had a wider safety margin in their trips down to the Bayside posts and back. The steady spread of horses onto the northern plains also inhibited the Indians of the far interior from making the journey, whereas the Cree, used to canoes and to a fish diet, were able to exploit the rivers for both movement and sustenance.

How familiar the members of the London Committee were with these ramifications of the western trade, with its middlemen, areas of direct and indirect trade, and other complications, is difficult to tell. If aware of the implications of the Cree-Assiniboine role, then they were disinclined to make direct contact with the more distant Indians until the middle years of the eighteenth century when French activity took on a new and menacing dimension. Henday's journey of 1754-5, which was a belated response to that threat, provided the first detailed information on the interior trade, though even then the confusion of his journals meant that at best the London Committee obtained only a hazy notion of its workings. Isham at York saw more clearly some of the implications of Henday's findings, and noted that the Cree traded furs from the distant Indians for one-third of the price (in goods) which they obtained for those furs at the Bayside. Further evidence of the substantial 'mark-up' of European goods traded in the interior came from an 'Archithinue' Indian who came down to York with the Cree in 1766 and told Andrew Graham through an interpreter that the Cree 'came amongst them and bought up their furs, giving them a gun for fifty wolves or beaver, six ditto for a hatchet, twenty ditto for a kettle, four for a knife, and so on . . . He was surprised to see me and the trader give a gun for fourteen beaver, a hatchet for one beaver, a large kettle for eight beaver etc.' By this time, Graham thought, only about ten per cent of the Cree 'inland traders' who came down to York trapped their own furs. A similar situation obtained at Churchill where Moses Norton reported that the 'Northern Indians' or Chipewyan, having traded a hatchet for one Made Beaver at the fort, then exchanged it for nine or ten skins from the 'Far Indians'—sure evidence that 'the Northern Indians will rather be a Hinderance to their coming to the Fort than otherwise in order to keep that Monopoly.'

The most detailed accounts of the annual visits of the trading Indians—by Isham, Henday and Graham—relate to York, which saw the largest number of Indians coming in to trade, and probably those who had travelled farthest. In the early 1740s Isham estimated that York attracted about 250 canoes and 550 Indians each summer, and there was no doubt a flamboyance about the trading visits to that factory not always present at the other posts. Certainly at the James Bay posts, the Eastern Cree—hunters and trappers rather than middlemen—seem to have arrived in small groups, staying only two or three days, and each trading fewer furs than a Western Cree would bring to York. For the York trade Henday's account is particularly informative since it describes the movements of the interior Cree and Assiniboine before their long journey down to the Bay, their building of canoes during the spring, and the final departure of a fleet of sixty canoes heading for the Bay. Each fleet or brigade was under the command of a leader or captain. The journey down to the factory, according to Graham (who had no direct experience of it but seems to have picked up considerable information on the subject from Henday and the trading Indians themselves) was far from orderly: 'all striving to be foremost, because of the greater prospects of procuring provisions by the way . . . during the voyage each Leader is canvassing with all imaginable art and earnestness for people to join his gang . . . for the more canoes under his command the greater he appears at the Factory'. The Indian canoes which came down to York, and which were shown in one of Isham's drawings, normally carried two adults, and furs equivalent to eighty or a hundred Made Beaver.



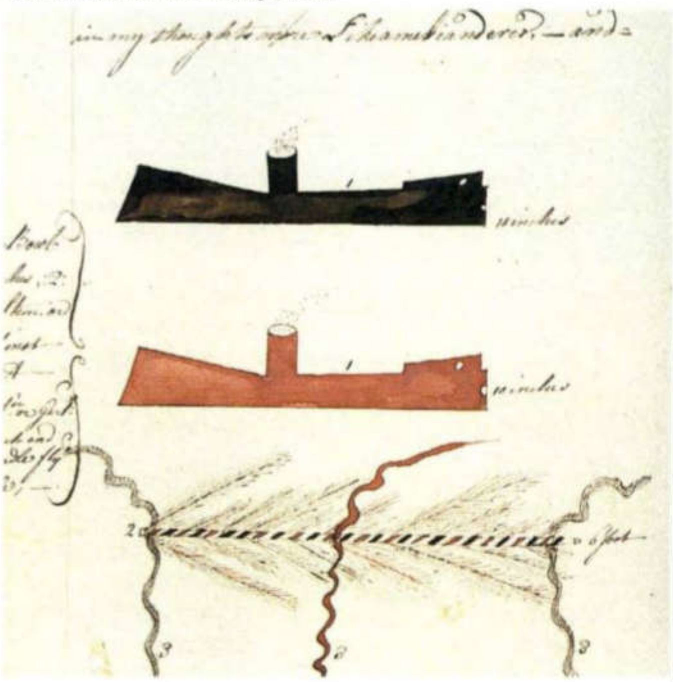
Prince of Wales's Fort, 1734. The Chipewyan Indians came overland to trade here, usually in the winter. Painted by A.H. Hider for the Hudson's Bay Company.

He noted that it was a sign of poor trading if the canoes arrived with women or children—'you Depend upon their having but few goods, but if all men Depend upon a Good Cargo'. By the time Graham was writing a quarter-century later he referred to the mid-section of the canoe carrying children as well as cargo, mentioned that the woman usually steered (leaving the man in the bow free to fire at game), and seems to have taken it for granted that families accompanied the trading Indians on their visits to the factory.

The arrival was marked with some ceremonial. The canoes assembled just out of sight, and then swept round the bend, each flotilla under a leader, whose canoe was distinguished by an ensign. This might be placed on the leader's tent once it was pitched. The various leaders with their 'lieutenants' then proceeded to the factory where they met the Company traders, smoked the calumet or pipe of peace, exchanged speeches and gifts, and then were conducted back to their encampment in procession, drum beating, and with the Indian leaders dressed in their new 'Captain's Outfit' of a regimental-style uniform. This exchange of gifts, greetings and assurances of friendship and good faith, dated from the pre-contact period. For the Indian it was an essential preliminary to any formal trading, a guarantee of security, and both the French and English conformed to it. John Oldmixon recorded in 1708 how the Company servants had made 'Compacts' to trade with the Indians, and that 'these Compacts were render'd as firm as the Indians could make them, by such Ceremonies as were most sacred and obligatory among them.' Farther south, in the areas of competition and warfare between New York and the St Lawrence, such ceremonies clearly had diplomatic and military implications, but it is difficult to see these as dominant in the exchanges at Hudson Bay. The customary speeches concentrated on the economic side of the contact: on goods, standards and measurements. The Indian leader 'tells how many canoes he has brought, what kind of winter they have had, what natives he has seen, are coming, or stay behind, asks how the Englishmen do, and says he is glad to see them. After which the Governor bids him welcome, tells him he has good goods and plenty; and that he loves the Indians and will be kind to them.'

After these preliminaries the trading window was open during the daylight hours for the duration of the Indians' stay, which at York was normally about two weeks. Certain elementary precautions were taken, so we read that 'the window is in the trading room in the south curtain, and accessible only by a boarded passage railed in from the outer works, so that all other communication with the Factory is excluded.' Isham has an intriguing dialogue, given by him in English and Cree, between a trader and Indians speaking at the window. It shows both sides driving a hard bargain. Throughout these exchanges the Indian leader would be admitted into the trading room, 'to satisfy them [the other Indians] that everything is measured fair, and that they have their due. He

Calumet. Pen and ink drawing by James Isham from his 'Observations on Hudsons Bay', 1743.



IMPERIAL CARROT
Chris Grant

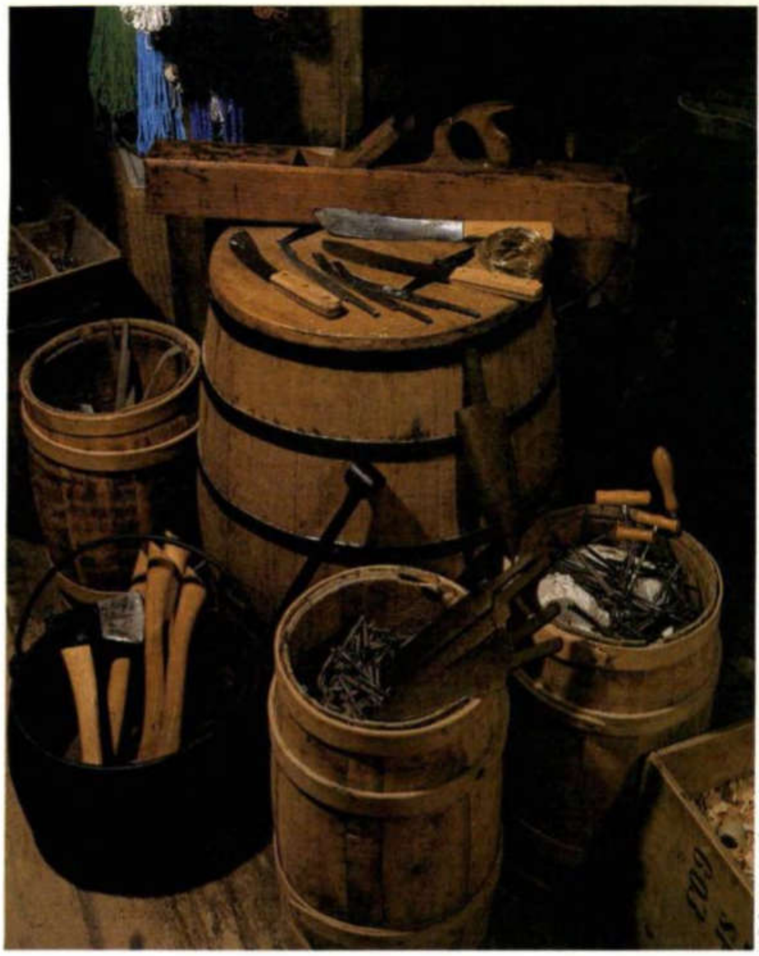
Tobacco leaves and tobacco cutter, pipe, chewing tobacco and tobacco carrots. Trade goods of the mid-1800s, from the H B C Historical Collection at Lower Fort Garry.

frequently talks to them out of the window, receives their furs, and carried the goods in exchange now and then to show his familiarity and consequence with the English.' At York at least he ate his meals with the factor. The lot of the leader was not always an enviable one. Hearne referred to the 'unwelcome commissions' they bore—'they are not only obliged to be the mouth-piece, but the beggars for all their friends and relations'. He would keep a few of the factor's presents for himself, but the need to satisfy his followers (who had probably contributed furs to the initial gift to the factor), and disregard of concepts of private possessions and accumulation of wealth, dictated a generous distribution among members of the group.

The trading captains, whether middlemen leading brigades of canoes down to York, or leaders bringing in smaller groups of hunters at Moose or Eastmain, were a direct result of the fur trade and its demands in the period before the establishment of inland posts by the Company. They were necessary if the 'upland' or 'inland' Indians were to be persuaded and organized to make the difficult, often hazardous journey down to the Bay posts. Generally, the trading captains seem to have lost their status out of season, and even in the summer their importance fluctuated from year to year. Hearne thought that their authority 'when absent from the Company's Factory, never extends beyond their own family; and the trifling respect which is shown them by their countrymen during their residence at the Factory, proceeds only from motives of interest.' In Indian society they probably occupied a transitory rather than a permanent and integral place. But there were exceptions. For all Hearne's disparagement of the trading captains, he recognized the dominant position of Matonabbee among the Chipewyan who traded at Churchill. The groups he brought in were large by any standard—116 Indians in 1774, for example—and he is often mentioned in the Churchill journals as 'the great Northern Leader'. The Cree trading captain, Wappenessew, first encountered far inland by Henday, was to play a prominent part in the York trade. Henday observed that 'he hath a great sway among the Indians'; for many years he led fleets of up to thirty canoes down to the factory, and as late as 1772 he was still noted as 'a person of prime consideration with the natives; and his influence is very extensive'. The researches of Charles Bishop have suggested that among the Ojibwa bands involved in the eighteenth-century fur trade the leaders not only 'represented their band in trade matters and received a special "captain's coat", a keg of rum, medals, and other trinkets symbolic of their status', but that they also inherited their position patrilineally and by primogeniture.

As the Indians made ready for departure they were given further presents. The scale of this practice seems to have increased over the years. Staunton, who had first served in the Bay in 1694, wrote in 1738 with his 'forty

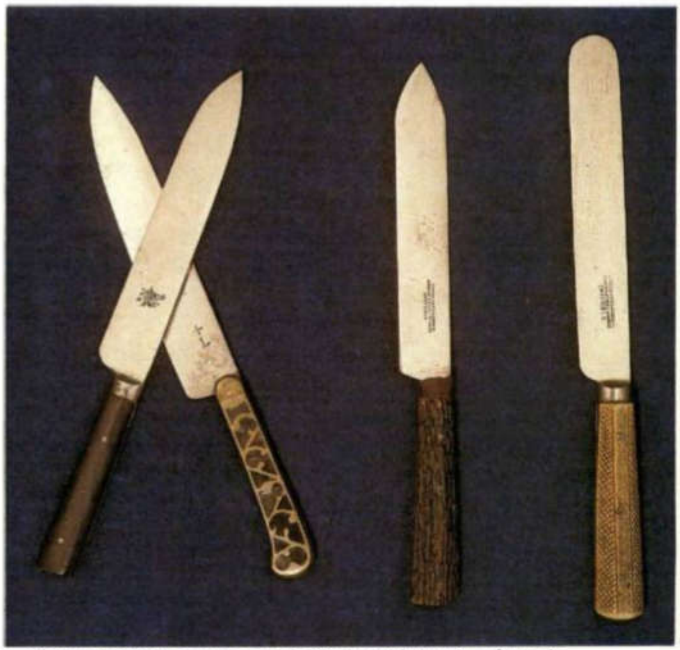
Trade goods : knives (including crooked, curved or canoe knife blades, sold without handles and given on the 1748 list as 'mocotaugan'), brass snare wire, axes and hatchets in iron kettle, augers for cabin or boat construction, kegs of nails.



H B C Historical Collection at Lower Fort Garry. Photograph by Chris Grant.

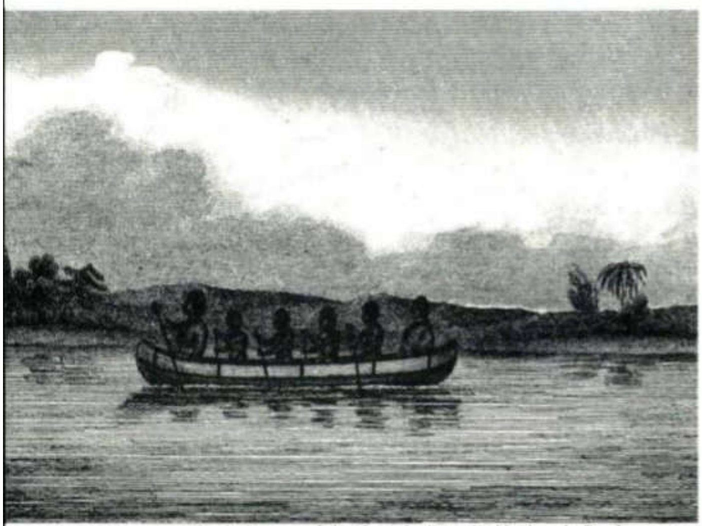
odd years' experience about the giving of presents to the Indians. His list is a modest one: a small quantity of provisions, prunes, brown biscuit, 'also a clean pipe with a piece tobacco'. At Albany in 1706 the Indian captain Whatting, who brought down twenty canoes, received one coat, six pounds of tobacco, six knives and a hatchet. By Graham's time the factor at York gave each captain a new gun with powder and shot, two gallons of brandy, six pounds of tobacco, and an array of lesser items. Even so, Graham added, 'there is no end of their craving. When they are going away they remind each other what to ask, and no sooner is one thing given but another is requested, until they know not what more is wanted.' The most extraordinary example of this comes from Hearne, who claimed that at Churchill in 1776 Matonabbee (always a law to himself) was given trade goods to the value of 400 Made Beaver for his present, and to the value of 700 Made Beaver for distribution to his followers. Otherwise, he threatened to take his furs to the Canadians. So, concluded Hearne, 'I was glad to comply with his demands.'

The descriptions by Isham, Graham and Hearne hint at problems—Indian dissatisfaction with trade goods or the standard of trade at a particular post, the factor's disappointment with the types or condition of the furs



From the H B C Archives Collection. Photograph by Neil Campbell.

'Cartouche' knives appear on the Company's invoices from the early nineteenth century. The mark shown on the knife, third from left, dates from the eighteenth century.



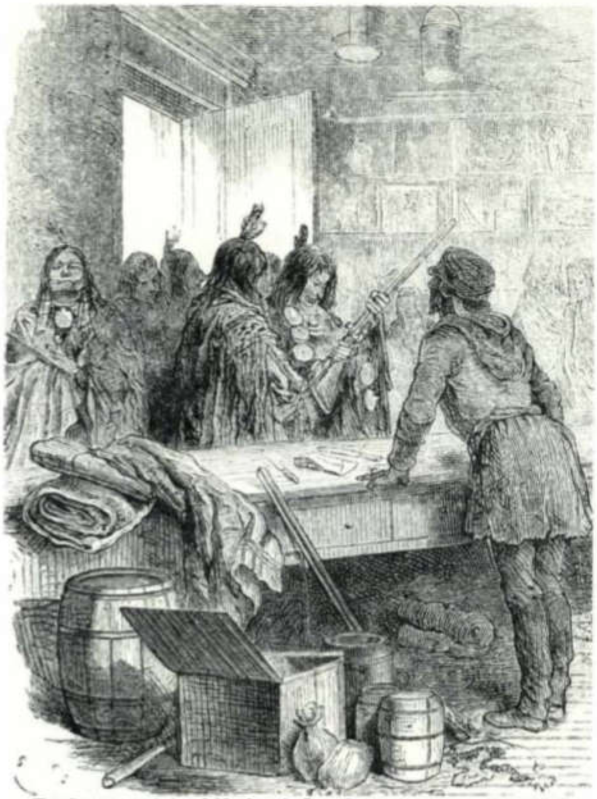
'Bark Canoe of the Cree Indians in Hudson's Bay'.
From Chappell's 'Narrative of a Voyage to Hudson's Bay', 1817.

brought in—but give no real indication of the complexities of the trade. For these we must turn to the factory journals, correspondence books and accounts, and even then it is not certain that they provide a full picture. We have already seen how the standard of trade was based on the Made Beaver (MB), and this remained the notional basis for exchange throughout the eighteenth century. On the one hand it assessed the worth of skins brought in by the Indians in terms of prime winter beaver (MB); on the other it listed trade goods by exactly the same reference (MB). It was a guide to both trader and Indian. In one sense it was an attempt by the Company to impose on the indigenous producer a valuation of furs in terms of the London market, but the earliest records from the 1670s show the difficulties in the way of this attempt as Bayly was forced to lower his standard in response to French competition. Towards the end of the seventeenth century, as wartime expenses rose and the demands for furs in Europe declined, it was the London Committee which tried to adjust the standard. In 1693 Geyer at York was told to raise the standard of trade—'two skins more p. Gun & soe proportionable'—and to put this into effect by giving larger presents to the Indian leaders at the same time as the trade standard was altered for their followers. 'This may be done privately the Comon Indians not knowing of it', the Committee thought, probably with excessive optimism. In this context we can see the limitation of the apparently straightforward and precise tables taken from the Albany journal of 1705-6 (the earliest surviving factory journal). In that trading year the factor Anthony Beale sent home from Albany furs and other commodities valued at 18,171 Made Beaver, but traded goods valued at only 12,538 Made Beaver. This markup, of fifty per cent in this instance, became known as the overplus. In Beale's time, beaver was a glut on the London market, and the Committee had ordered its factors 'to Supress by all wayes Imaginable the Indians from Cloggin us therewith'. The demand was for small furs, especially martens. So Beale would have adjusted his standard accordingly. This was never a simple procedure. Beale had to reconcile his instructions from London with the skins actually brought in by the Indians. Like any other factor at a time of difficult commercial conditions, Beale walked a tight-rope during the trading season. If he followed the London Committee's instructions to the letter he would antagonize the Indians, perhaps lose their trade, possibly even condemn some of them to starvation the following winter. If he interpreted them too liberally he would trade worthless furs which could not be sold on the London market. That the Committee understood something of the dilemma is shown by its addendum to its instructions to Beale that he was to threaten the Indians with a refusal to trade provisions except for small furs—'although wee & you Know you must doe otherwise, or some of them will starve'.

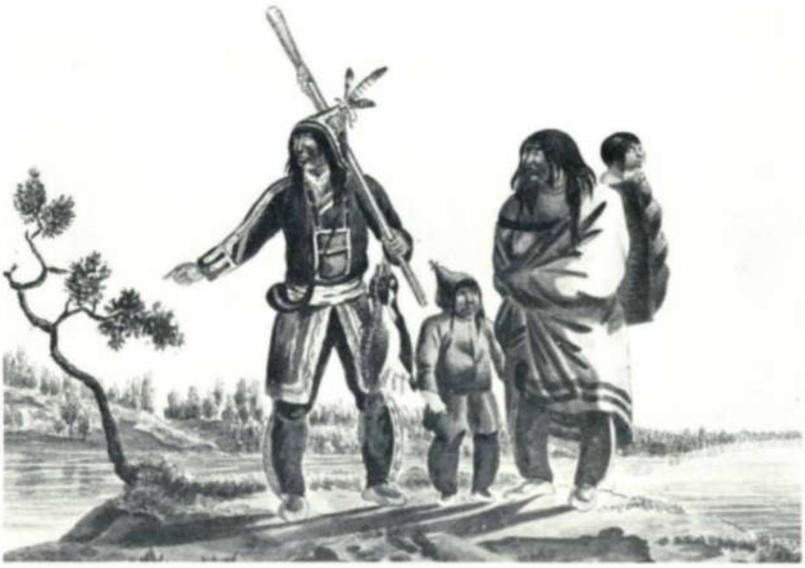
Apart from the overall problem of reconciling European demand with the actual Indian catch of furs, the quality and type of the trade goods supplied by the Company led to as much criticism as did the condition of the furs brought in by the Indians. There were times when factors and leading Indians seem to have engaged in an orgy of mutual complaint and recrimination. Fullartine at Albany had no short-barrelled muskets to trade in 1703; yet, he told the London Committee, they 'are the most in request with the upland Indians which they continually call for and has teased me so about them that it almost distracted me this summer.' He added, in a comment which had a more general application than the problem of these particular muskets: 'I have often told them what you wrote concerning them and that they stood more in England than the beaver they gave for them wd. fetch, but 'tis hard to make an Indian sensible of anything of that nature.' In 1712 Beale wrote from Albany that the fire-steels sent to him were so bad that the Indians 'do make a hooting and a laugh at them'. Four years later McCliesh at the same factory notified the Committee of a stream of Indian complaints about the size of kettles, the quality of broadcloth, the length of muskets, and the type of shot. The Indians were perhaps more touchy than usual about such matters since McCliesh, following the Committee's instructions to stress to the Indians the worthlessness of certain skins, had 'burnt 150 coat and parchment [beaver] before their faces'. In 1739 the Committee, which had asked factors to supply evidence of alleged defects in trade goods, was overwhelmed by the response from Isham at York, who collected and sent home Indian criticisms of no fewer than eighteen categories of trade goods. That same year Richard Norton at Churchill returned one hundred sword blades to the Company, pointing out that he had ordered bayonets, and 'that if your honours do not conceive the difference, the natives do'.

Though fashion was sometimes a consideration, the Indian insistence on light but durable metal goods is entirely understandable. Firearms which burst, hatchets or knives which cracked, kettles which were too heavy to transport from place to place, could endanger the lives of an Indian and his family. Usually far distant from the factory, he would have no chance of replacing the faulty item or having it replaced until the following summer. Better equipped than in the pre-contact days when he depended on weapons and tools of bone or stone, he was now vulnerable in a different way, and there was a continual battle at the factories over the 'fussiness' of the Indians in refusing to accept guns and other implements in less than perfect condition. The Company men often suspected ill usage in explaining problems with guns in particular—'firing them when the Muzel is Stopt with Snow', for example—but whatever the truth of this there is little evidence of goods of patently inferior quality being palmed off on the Indians. They examined and chose their guns with great care, and once the choice was made each gun had a label attached bearing the mark of the individual Indian. Tobacco was scrutinized for thickness of roll (since it was sold by length), moisture and darkness. The Indians appear in the Company records as customers with clear views on the category and quality of goods they received, and they were not averse to putting pressure on the factors by threatening to go elsewhere. As McCliesh reported from York in 1728, 'Never was any man so upbraided with our powder, kettles and hatchets, than we have been this summer by all the natives, especially by those that borders near the French.'

In trading methods much had to be left to the factor's discretion. At some stage, for example, the practice of allowing Indians credit developed. When the veteran trader Richard Staunton was posted to Moose in 1737 after eleven years away from the Bay, he was surprised to find 'a new . . . and very bad custom' of allowing Indians hundreds of furs' worth of credit in force at both Moose and Albany. The earliest Eastmain records, in 1739, also refer to credit being extended to the Indians. The London Committee officially prohibited the practice in 1741, but Isham two years later discussed the size of an individual Indian's debt as though the custom was standard at the northern posts of York and Churchill. A judicious allocation of credit by a factor could help to see an Indian and his family safely through the winter; too generous an allocation, on the other hand, might tempt an Indian to take his furs the following year to another Company post or even to the French rather than face repayment. When Henry Pollexfen took over at Moose in 1757 he found there debts of more than 800 Made Beaver which the Indians concerned seemed to have little intention of settling on the grounds that they were presumed to have lapsed with the departure of the factor who had granted them. There was clearly some manipulation of the debt system by the Indians, and in the 1760s Graham explained that 'it is past belief what tricks the natives will play between the Forts . . . I have heard the natives at Severn laughing among themselves at such proceedings.'


Trading at an inland Hudson's Bay Company store, circa 1845.

On occasion the London Committee made efforts to discover more about trade practices in the Bay by sending a formal questionnaire to its factors. In 1738 such an enquiry centred on the exchange of presents with the Indians, and the vexed issue of the overplus. On the latter Staunton at Moose pointed out that 'it is an easy matter to know from whence it proceeds'. On guns, blankets, files and the like 'your honours will not have one skin of overplus, all the Indians knowing what they must give for everything they trade.' The overplus came from watering brandy. Although an Indian recently lured from the French might be given it neat, a more established customer would have it diluted with one-quarter water, and a hunter bringing in provisions with as much as one-third water. Isham at York made the same point—the overplus came from watered brandy, beads and paint. From Norton at Churchill came a defiant response which shocked and angered the Committee. The overplus was 'a point of management'; its application rested with the factor, who had a 'great dependence' on it; finally and conclusively, he refused to reveal any details. There can be no doubt that the increase in value of the presents exchanged with the Indian captains, the spread of the debt system, and the stepping-up of the overplus opera-



The Home Indians lived close to the posts and were employed to hunt and trap. This Cree hunter and his family were sketched at York Factory by P. Rindisbacher in 1821.

Public Archives of Canada

tion, all made the Company's efforts to control its servants' trading activities increasingly difficult.

The whole subject of the overplus was given a public airing during the attacks on the Company in the 1740s. Dobbs gave it some prominence in his 1744 *Account of Hudson's Bay,* and a few years later Robson attacked the overplus system as 'big with iniquity', a scandalous practice which was driving the Indians to the French. By the time Graham was reporting from York and Severn in the 1760s the overplus there applied to most of the Company's trade goods, ranging from a 100 per cent mark-up on brandy, vermilion and kettles to a strict adherence to the official standard for guns, powder and Brazil tobacco. It is clear that by this time the overplus operation had increased in scale and complexity well beyond the rudimentary device of watering brandy. It seems to have been accepted as a normal part of the trade, by which factors could compensate for the presents they had given to the Indian leaders, adjust to the threat of competition, and generally respond to the trading conditions of a particular year. The researches of Arthur Ray have illuminated different aspects of the overplus. He has shown, for example, that at York in Graham's time about 65 per cent to 70 per cent of the overplus came from goods which had to be *measured*—hence the repeated Indian complaints and exhortations: 'your powder measure is small', 'tell your servants to fill the measure and not to put their fingers within the brim', 'let us see the old measures', 'give us good measure'. There was a clear connection between the overplus and competition: the most erratic fluctuations were at Moose, nearest to the French, and the most stable exchange rates held at distant Churchill. The upper limit of the overplus was round the 50 per cent mark; over that the Indians would take their furs to the French. If Graham was correct in maintaining that the average Indian canoe coming down to York and Severn held furs equivalent to a hundred Made Beaver at most, of which about seventy would be traded for 'real necessaries', the rest going on brandy, 'baubles' and 'superfluities', then there was a limit to the Indians' tolerance of a shifting of the trade standard. Too severe an adjustment, and a cargo of furs would not bring in enough supplies to last through the winter. While the overplus or factor's standard fluctuated from post to post, and from year to year, the official or notional standard of trade remained almost unchanged; but in 1769 the encroachments of the Canadians finally forced the Company to make substantial alterations in the standard 'to give greater encouragement to the Indians'.

Graham's estimate of the proportion of essential and luxury goods traded by the Indians at York is supported by the recent work of Toby Morantz and others which has shown that the James Bay Cree traded some non-essentials at the posts even in years when they brought in few furs. This raises the wider question of the influence of the fur trade and its goods on the Indians, a subject on which generalization is difficult since the impact varied according to place and circumstance. Most obviously affected were the Home Indians, living close to the factory. The younger men were virtually employees of the Company, while some of the women lived in the factory as wives or 'bedfellows'. These Indians trapped and fished for the garrison and carried the fort packets; in return they received provisions. Contact with the traders' routine was evident in several ways. For example, the Cree names given by the Home Indians to the days of the week were related to the Europeans' activities, so Sunday was 'talking day', Saturday 'the sharing day, for the Europeans being served provisions', and so on. By mid-century Graham considered that the two hundred or so Indians living around York were 'so degenerate as scarcely to be able to endure their native labours and climate'. Alcohol was one reason for this, for it had become the standard form of payment for venison, so that 'the natives are destroyed by hard drinking'. By the 1760s these included Ojibwa, some of whom had left their hunting grounds and moved north to York to kill deer in return for brandy. More generally, brandy flowed in the ceremonial exchanges at the factory, and as a reward for bringing in the prized small furs—except at Churchill, where the Chipewyan showed little liking for spirits. Elsewhere, as Isham had noted, 'that Bewitching spirit calld. Brandy . . . has been the Ruing of a Great many Indians', but without it he warned that the trade in small furs would fall away.

As yet, alcohol had made little impact on the interior Indians if only because of the difficulty of transporting it inland. Here the question was rather of the extent to which the Indians, even those who never visited a Bayside post, were becoming dependent on European weapons and implements. Again, proximity to the factory seems to have been crucial. William Falconer at Severn in 1769 made a distinction between the Indians of the interior and those nearby—'they being so much used to the gun etc that the use of the bows and arrows is so little practized by the low-country Natives; they could not subsist by it alone . . . yet the uplanders, that can do very well without us at present.' For the Montagnais and still more the Naskapi of the Eastmain interior, caribou hunting was more important than the trapping and trading of beaver, and the Company struggled against their self-contained lifestyle until well into the nineteenth century. The same was true in this period of the Chipewyan away to the northwest of Churchill, for most of whom direct dependence on the meat of the caribou was more important than indirect dependence on the fur of the beaver or marten. On the other hand, the care with which the trading Cree at York selected firearms, tools and domestic utensils showed how important European metal goods had become to Indians as far away as the Saskatchewan and the plains beyond. David Thompson wrote later of his experiences among the interior Indians: 'See the wife of an Indian sewing their leather clothing with a pointed brittle bone or a sharp thorn and the time and trouble it takes. Show them an awl or a strong needle and they will gladly give the finest Beaver or Wolf skin they have to purchase it.' There were still weapons and implements made of wood or bone—bows, arrows, fish-spears, hooks—but they were decreasing in number and importance, and even the traditional sledges and canoes were now being made with the help of iron axes and knives.

Once set in train, the process of dependence on European metal goods and firearms was difficult to reverse. As Richard King in the 1830s passed through Athabasca and other areas under Company influence he noted that the Indians:

> have lost their original mode of hunting; the use of the bow and arrow is gone, the gun having been placed in their room, by which they become dependent upon the Company for their powder and shot. To make an Indian really a hunter with the bow and arrow, a deer-stalker, takes a whole life; you cannot re-teach the present generation; it takes a whole life to learn to approach at this distance the animal for which the bow and arrow come into use.

Much earlier in the Company's history, there are well-documented examples of Indians dying either at the Bayside posts or on their return journey because of the failure of the supply ship to arrive—York in 1715 provides an example—but it would be wrong to assume from such episodes that the Indians had already become totally dependent on European provisions and ammunition. Rather, the problem in this and similar instances was that the Indians had assumed that their trapping activities, pushed forward at the expense of hunting for game, would be supported by European supplies in the late summer. It was the failure of the supplies to materialize, and the lateness of the season when this was realized, which led to starvation and death for many Indians. On other occasions, a change of habitat and activity arising from the European trading presence led to problems. So, in 1728 McCliesh reported from York that some 'great Plain Indians' were 'almost famished, there being no buffalo and but few deer in those parts where they resort to in the winter, which often disappoints them in catching of martens.' In 1732 Joseph Adams at Albany expressed the dilemma of the inland Indians in terms of time rather than location—'they would not lay up a quantity of victuals for their families' sustenance while they was employed getting martens'. This is dependence of a sort, not that which comes from utter helplessness, but rather from participation in a system of mutual aid and interchange in which the Indians who trapped and traded instead of hunted reasonably expected to be supplied from the factories.

In less definable ways, too, the fur trade was bringing changes. The development of family hunting territories, the emergence of trading captains, the acceptance by the Indians of the European concept of individual debts, came in response to the demands of the fur trade. Even when the European traders were confined to the shores of the Bay, or to the St Lawrence, the ramifications of their presence were felt deep in the interior, changing the lifestyle, relationships and location of many Indians. Most noticeable in this period is the expansion of the Cree, armed with muskets, jealous of their dominant position in the trade, and pushing farther west throughout the century. Such movements had an effect on tribes well outside the range of direct European contact, and with the penetration, first of the French and then of the Company men, deep into the interior, the process of change increased in pace and impact.

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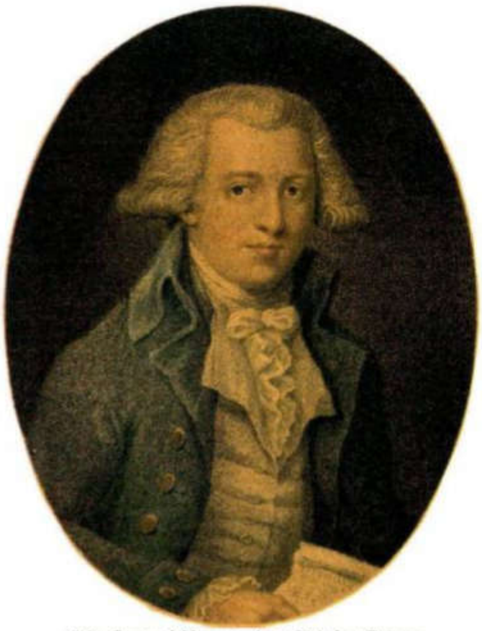


'Mr. Samuel Hearne, late Chief at Prince of Wales's Fort, Hudson's Bay'. Coloured engraving, artist unknown, 1796.

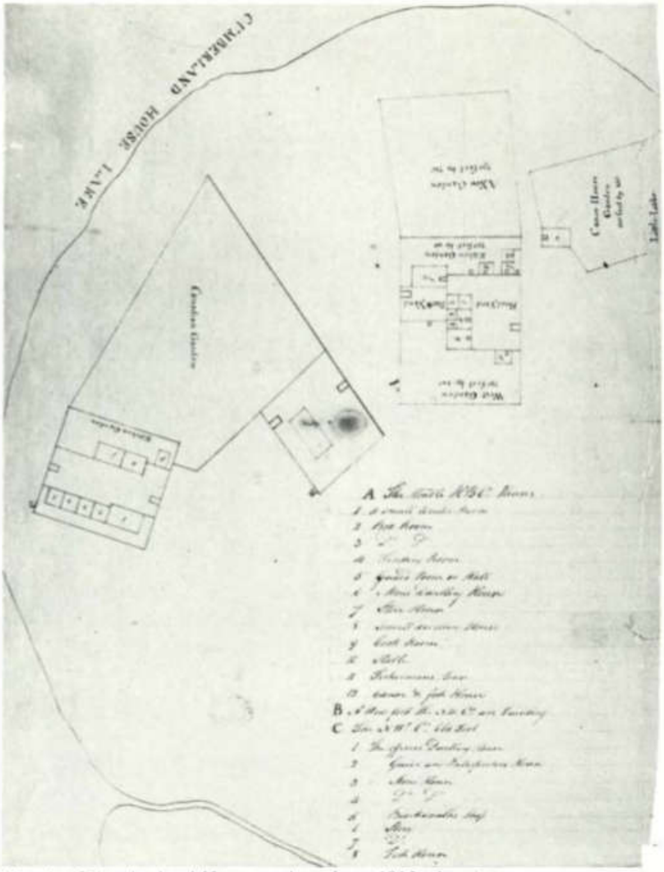
V. THE MOVE INLAND

THE CHANGES in the official standard of trade in 1769, the raising of salaries and the prohibition of private trapping in 1770, formed part of an effort by the Hudson's Bay Company to put its operations on a sounder footing in the face of a new and growing threat. The opportunity presented in the interior by the conquest of Canada had vanished almost before the London Committee had grasped the implications of the French withdrawal, for by the mid-1760s the river routes leading westward from Montreal were in use again, this time by traders whose resources were greater than those of their predecessors. Many of the French canoemen and interpreters remained, but they were now supported in Quebec, Montreal and Michilimackinac by the capital of businessmen from Britain and the American colonies. Loosely organized in a series of fluctuating partnerships and syndicates, the new traders could call on the credit facilities, quality trade goods and marketing techniques of the London business world, and they presented a more serious commercial threat to the Hudson's Bay Company than the French had ever done.

At the Bottom of the Bay the Company became involved once more in a strenuous struggle for trade as a new breed of English 'pedlars' worked their way from the St Lawrence to the height of land where they joined the petty traders from Quebec who had never ceased their activities on the headwaters of the rivers running down to James Bay. Seen from Moose and Albany the pattern was an old but worrying one: the Indians traded their best beaver and marten inland, then came down to the Company posts hoping to exchange the remnants of their catch for the Brazil tobacco and heavier goods which the Canadians could not supply. Neither the lowering of the trade standard nor threats by the Company factors to stop trading had much effect, and although Henley House was re-established in 1766 Albany's trade continued to decline—from over 10,000 Made Beaver in 1763-4 to a little more than 3,000 Made Beaver ten years later. From 1770 onwards the London Committee was encouraging its traders to move inland and bring the Indians down, but it flinched at the expense and complications of establishing actual posts in the interior. Although Company men reached Abitibi and Michipicoten in 1774 and 1775, not until 1777 was Gloucester House established as the first genuine inland post from James Bay; and by then the Company's hand on inland posts had been forced by developments farther west.

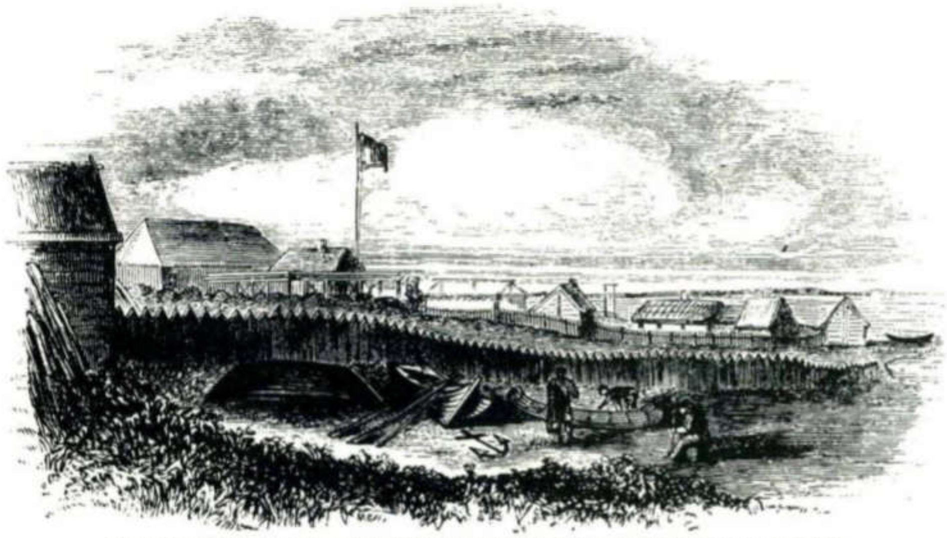
There, around Lake Winnipeg and on the Saskatchewan and the plains, lay richer commercial prizes in areas as yet thinly exploited by the fur traders. By 1766 York became aware of the return of competition in an unfamiliar guise when canoes came in without either marten or coat beaver, these having gone to the 'English pedlars inland'. Reconnaissance probes revealed the nature and extent of this new threat, while in 1767-8 William Tomison circled Lake Winnipeg to find both 'English and French traders daily taking what furs the natives catches'. At the Bayside that season saw a dramatic drop in York's trade from the 30,000 Made Beaver average of the previous ten years to little more than 18,000; the factor, Ferdinand Jacobs, complained that 'The Canada pedlars are got in the very heart of the trading Indians' country that comes to this place . . . These pedlars being in the centre of the trading Indians is a great inducement to them to trade their furs with them, which saves them the carriage of several hundred miles. Your servants amongst them have not the least influence to put a stop to it.' His suggestion to London that inland posts should be established, re-opened the question which had lain dormant since Henday's journey. The Committee's reluctance to agree to Jacobs' proposal was in line with previous attitudes and previous experience. The chequered history of Henley House seemed to show that inland posts involved greater problems of private trading, relations with Indian women, and alcohol, than the Bayside factories. Furs traded at inland establishments might be taken at the expense of the permanent tidewater posts. Finally, there was the problem of transportation. At York the Company had neither birch-bark canoes nor servants able to handle them, and it was significant that at Albany, where bark was available, the Company servants were so 'intirly Unhandy in Cannoes' that from the late 1740s Henley was partly supplied by flat-bottomed boats or barges which in principle, if not design, were the forerunners of the celebrated York boats of a later period. So the Committee's initial response to the crisis developing inland from the Bay was to continue the policy of sending servants into the interior in ones and twos, and to support their efforts by adopting a more generous standard of trade at the factories.

By 1772 this had failed, and from Andrew Graham, with experience of trade at York and Severn, came fresh evidence of the seriousness of the situation. He reported how the Canadians at their inland posts traded tobacco and alcohol with the Indians so that 'every inducement to visit the Company's Factories is forgot, and the prime furs are picked out and traded. The refuse is tied up and brought down to us.' Even Wappenessew, who had led canoes down to York regularly since Henday's time, failed to appear. Instead came a message that he 'hopes you will knot Bee angri with him as he has Drunk so much Brandy this winter he cannot Com.' From a Canadian deserter, Graham learnt details of the efficient mercantile organization in the east which supported the Pedlars in the field. Previously sceptical about the value of inland posts, in 1772 he argued that competition could be met only by the setting up of a rival post at The Pas, well stocked with ammunition, Brazil tobacco and brandy. In 1773 Matthew Cocking returned from an inland journey which had taken him as far as the Eagle Hills (near present-day Battleford, Saskatchewan), to report ever-increasing activity by the Canadians; and York's returns fell that year to 8,000 Made Beaver.



Sketch of Cumberland House and gardens, 1815, showing the H B C houses (A) and the North West Company's buildings (B and C).

In London the Committee had decided on a change of policy even before the news came of these latest trade losses, for in May 1773 it sent instructions to York that an inland post should be established at or near The Pas by Samuel Hearne, recently returned from his arduous journey to the Coppermine River. A series of misfortunes prevented the inland venture setting off in 1773, but the next summer Hearne got away and reached a point sixty miles beyond The Pas. At Pine Island Lake just north of the Saskatchewan he built the first Cumberland House, 450 miles from York in a direct line, nearer 700 miles by canoe. Although only a log shack, the post was well situated, for several Indian trade routes met at this point before they reached the area of Pedlar posts near The Pas. Moreover, as Hearne pointed out, 'The Distance from York Fort into these Parts Is much nearer than from any Part of Canady'. But he sounded a warning when he stressed 'the greatest obstical' facing the Company inland, the lack of canoes. The Company's strategic advantage of a shorter route from its supply bases to the Saskatchewan was nullified by the inability of its servants to master the techniques of inland travel.

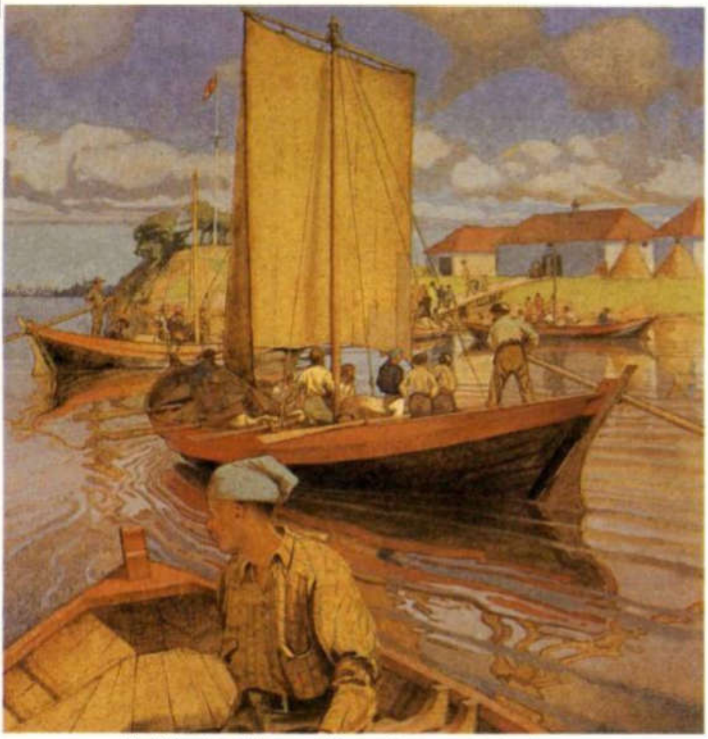


Cumberland House, from a sketch taken by the Henry Youle Hind expedition of 1858.

An individual venture among the Indians with a few parcels of trade goods was one thing; the organization of a reliable transport system quite another. Hearne and his little party had reached the interior only by begging places in the Indian canoes returning from York, and at Cumberland House his efforts to persuade Indians to build canoes for the Company met with little success. Even when canoes were available, canoemen were not; for the Company had no equivalent of the Canadian *voyageurs,* 'those natural water Dogs' who handled the capacious *canot du nord* with consummate skill. Cumberland House in isolation could offer only feeble competition to the Canadians as they pushed farther along the Saskatchewan, bypassing the little post on Pine Island Lake, and benefitting from the bringing forward of their main supply depot to Grand Portage at the western end of Lake Superior. In 1778 Peter Pond did not even come down to Grand Portage; using supplies still left in the trading areas he moved northwest across the height of land at the Methy Portage and into Athabasca.

Pond's revelation of the rich fur country of Athabasca helped to prompt the formation in 1779 of a sixteen-share consortium of merchants which emerged in 1783 in recognizable form as the famous North West Company. A loose copartnership, the Company underwent several reorganizations and changes of personnel, but for thirty years it represented a formidable union of mercantile skills with enterprise in the field. The endurance of its *voyageurs* and the tenacity of its wintering partners would have gone for nothing without the smooth coordination of the transportation system which moved goods from Montreal to Grand Portage each summer. The rapid expansion along the Saskatchewan and into Athabasca would have collapsed without the mundane business of collecting pemmican on the plains to supply the brigades and to cache along the routes. The North Westers were as ruthless as they were dashing—ruthless both towards their competitors and towards the Indians. Hudson's Bay men accustomed to the trading conventions of the Bayside posts were shaken by what they saw of Canadian methods inland. William Tomison noted the activities of one Pedlar, Charles McCormick, on the Saskatchewan in 1779: 'it is a great pity that such a body of Natives should be destroyed by a parcel of wild fellows such as Mac'Cormick going about with Sword in hand threatening the Indians to make them trade with him whether they will or not.' It was no accident that the Canadians rather than the Hudson's Bay men suffered most from Indian attacks, and the growing antagonism in some regions between the North Westers and the Indians was to prove a serious weakness to the Montreal traders.

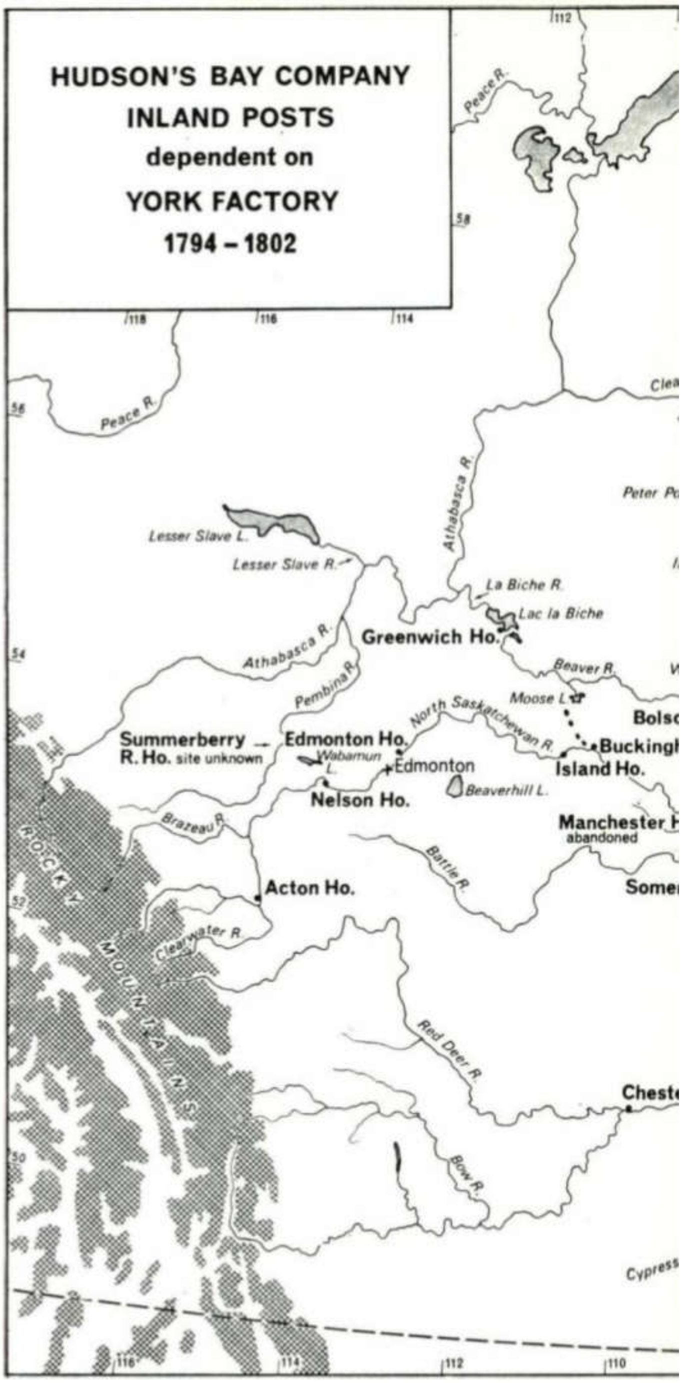
Faced with these flamboyant competitors, the Hudson's Bay men often felt themselves the poor relations of the fur trade; but there was a steady determination about the Company's response to the challenge of the North Westers which hinted that the struggle might be a long one. The Company's move inland from Albany which had led to the establishment of Gloucester House continued in the 1780s and took its servants near the supply lines of the Canadian traders. The country between Lake Superior and Lake Winnipeg was no longer a prime fur-bearing region, but on its lakes and rivers were the staging posts where supplies from Montreal were stored for the brigades, and wild rice and other country provisions collected. In 1786 the Hudson's Bay Company drove a wedge towards this area when it established Osnaburgh House at Lake St Joseph and in the 1790s pushed over the height of land to set up posts at Red Lake, Lake of the Woods, Rainy Lake and other sensitive points along the North Westers' transportation routes. The net-

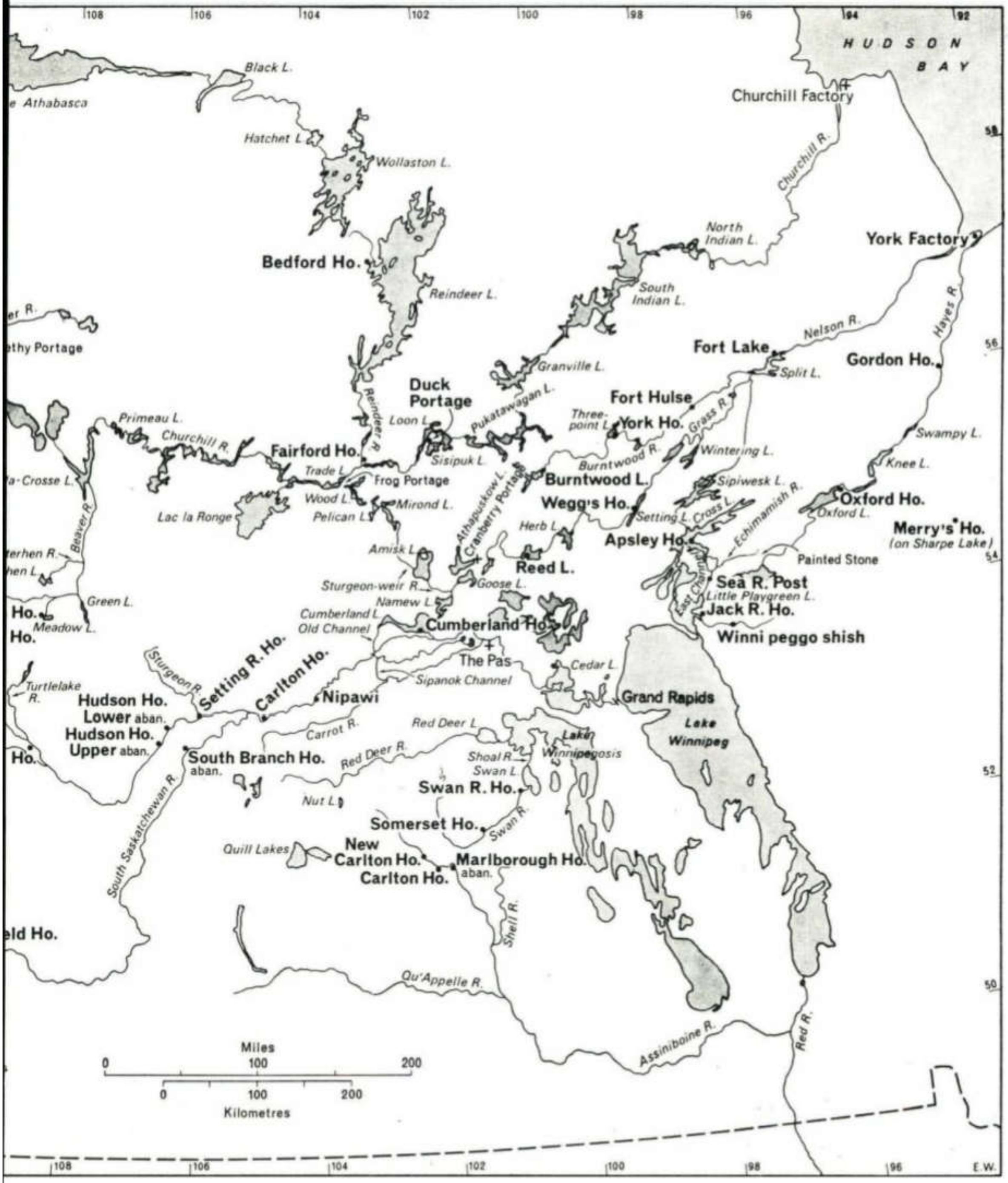


York boats at Norway House. From a painting by W.J. Phillips for the Hudson's Bay Company.

work of new Company establishments was more impressive on paper than on the ground. Most were small, temporary posts, and the Company journals for the period reveal a continuous and confusing process of building and rebuilding, abandoning, naming and renaming of posts. Moreover, there were constant difficulties in manning and supplying them. But the reality of the Company's presence was undoubted, and it was met in kind by a growing number of Canadian posts in the area, often alongside the Hudson's Bay establishments. A war of attrition had begun which in the end was to exhaust both companies.

On the Saskatchewan the Hudson's Bay Company continued the move inland which Hearne had begun. There was a solidity about the Company's expansion, shown in the way it trained and used explorers such as Philip Turnor, David Thompson and Peter Fidler, who mapped the inland routes with a thoroughness never approached by the North Westers. As the Company recovered from the destruction of Churchill and York by French naval forces in 1782 it built up its inland forces, and in 1786 appointed William Tomison Chief at York, *to reside inland.* For the first time the Bayside posts were relegated to a subordinate status, and the extension of Company posts deep into the interior can be followed through Tomison's movements as he shifted headquarters steadily upriver on the North Saskatchewan from Manchester House (1786), to Buckingham House (1792), and then to Edmonton House (1795). This last was a full 400 miles in a direct line from Cumberland House, which was now a provision depot storing and distributing dried buffalo meat and fish. Acton House, built in 1799, was on the fringes of the Rocky Mountains. Some of the posts were little more than temporary shelters. David Thompson described Bedford House, established at Reindeer Lake in 1796: 'We builded Log Huts to pass the winter, the chimneys were of mud and coarse grass, but somehow did not carry off the smoke, and the Huts were wretched with smoke, so that however bad the weather, we were glad to leave the Huts.' Other posts were situated close to North Wester establishments, sometimes only a stone's throw away. Relations with the Canadians varied. Often two posts co-existed amicably


HUDSON'S BAY COMPANY
INLAND POSTS
dependent on
YORK FACTORY
1794 – 1802
112
118
116
114
58
56
54
52
50
Peace R.
Peace R.
Clea
Peter Po
Lesser Slave L.
Lesser Slave R.
Athabasca R.
Athabasca R.
La Biche R.
Lac la Biche
Greenwich Ho.
Beaver R.
Moose L.
Bols
Buckingh
Island Ho.
North Saskatchewan R.
Pembina R.
Summerberry R. Ho. site unknown
Edmonton Ho.
Wabamun L.
Edmonton
Beaverhill L.
Nelson Ho.
Manchester H
abandoned
Brazeau R.
Battle R.
Acton Ho.
Some
Clearwater R.
ROCKY MOUNTAINS
Red Deer R.
Chest
Bow R.
Cypress
116
114
112
110


HUDSON BAY
Churchill Factory
Black L.
Athabasca
Hatchet L.
Wollaston L.
Churchill R.
North Indian L.
York Factory
Bedford Ho.
Reindeer L.
South Indian L.
Nelson R.
Hayes R.
Fort Lake
Gordon Ho.
Split L.
Granville L.
Duck Portage
Fort Hulse
Pukatawagan L.
Three-point L.
York Ho.
Grass R.
Primeau L.
Churchill R.
Loon L.
Reindeer R.
Swampy L.
Fairford Ho.
Sisipuk L.
Burntwood R.
Wintering L.
Knee L.
Trade L.
Frog Portage
Burntwood L.
Sipiwesk L.
Oxford Ho.
Oxford L.
Wood L.
Mirond L.
Athapuskow L.
Cranberry Portage
Wegg's Ho.
Setting L.
Cross L.
Echimamish R.
Lac la Ronge
Pelican L.
Herb L.
Merry's Ho. (on Sharpe Lake)
Beaver R.
Amisk L.
Apsley Ho.
Painted Stone
Reed L.
Sturgeon-weir R.
Goose L.
Sea R. Post
Little Playgreen L.
Jack R. Ho.
East Channel
Green L.
Namew L.
Cumberland L.
Cumberland Old Channel
Cumberland Ho.
Winni peggo shish
Meadow L.
The Pas
Cedar L.
Sturgeon R.
Setting R. Ho.
Carlton Ho.
Sipanok Channel
Turtlelake R.
Hudson Ho. Lower aban.
Hudson Ho. Upper aban.
Nipawi
Grand Rapids
Carrot R.
Red Deer L.
Lake Winnipeg
Lake Winnipegosis
South Branch Ho. aban.
Red Deer R.
Shoal R.
Swan L.
Swan R. Ho.
Nut L.
South Saskatchewan R.
Somerset Ho.
Swan R.
Quill Lakes
New Carlton Ho.
Carlton Ho.
Marlborough Ho. aban.
Shell R.
Qu'Appelle R.
Assiniboine R.
Red R.
Miles
0
100
200
0
100
200
Kilometres
108
106
104
102
100
98
96
94
92
58
56
54
52
50
E.W.

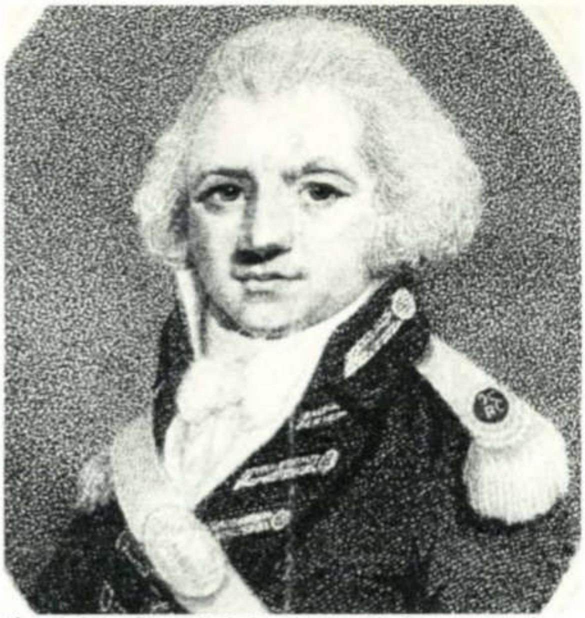
Map from 'Saskatchewan Journals and Correspondence 1795-1802', Hudson's Bay Record Society, Volume XXVI.

enough, with the men playing football and the masters exchanging hospitality, newspapers and books; but there were also incidents of violence and terror which showed the reality of competition between the two concerns. In supplying its posts the Hudson's Bay Company made a significant innovation when it introduced boats on the Saskatchewan—'York boats', to use the name given them by a later generation. Flat-bottomed, with the high pointed bow and stern of Orkney fishing craft, the inland boats were to prove more capacious and durable, if heavier, than the great canoes of the Canadians.

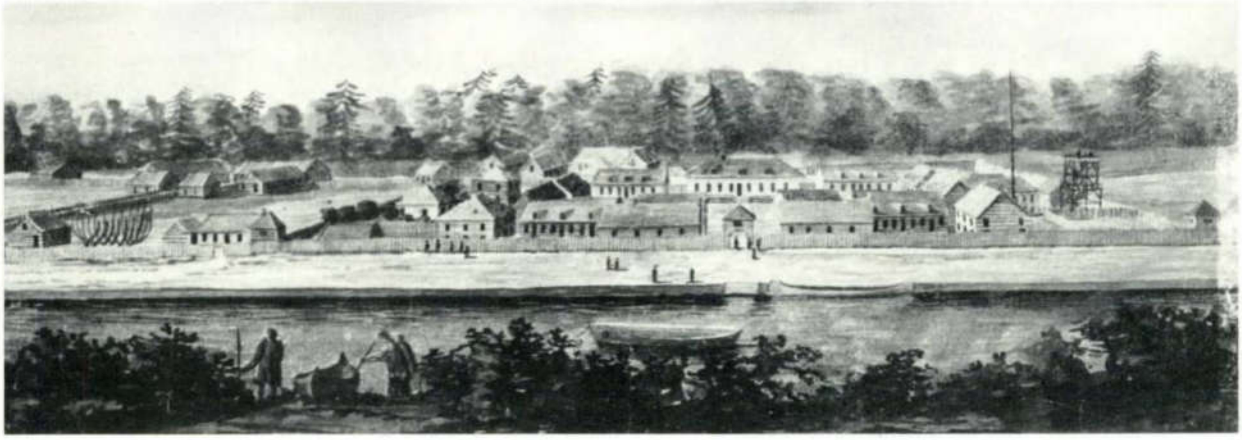
The Company's response, though impressive in some ways, was weakened by the lack of skilled manpower and a multiplicity of objectives. At York the factor, Joseph Colen, complained that so many resources were being sent to the Saskatchewan that 'we shall have Strangers settle within a Days hunt of the Factory'; yet in 1787 Tomison found himself inland with only 44 men to match against 180 Canadians. Likewise, if the Saskatchewan position was strengthened, then there would be no men to spare for Athabasca. Trade at Churchill was also affected, for with the Canadians firmly established in

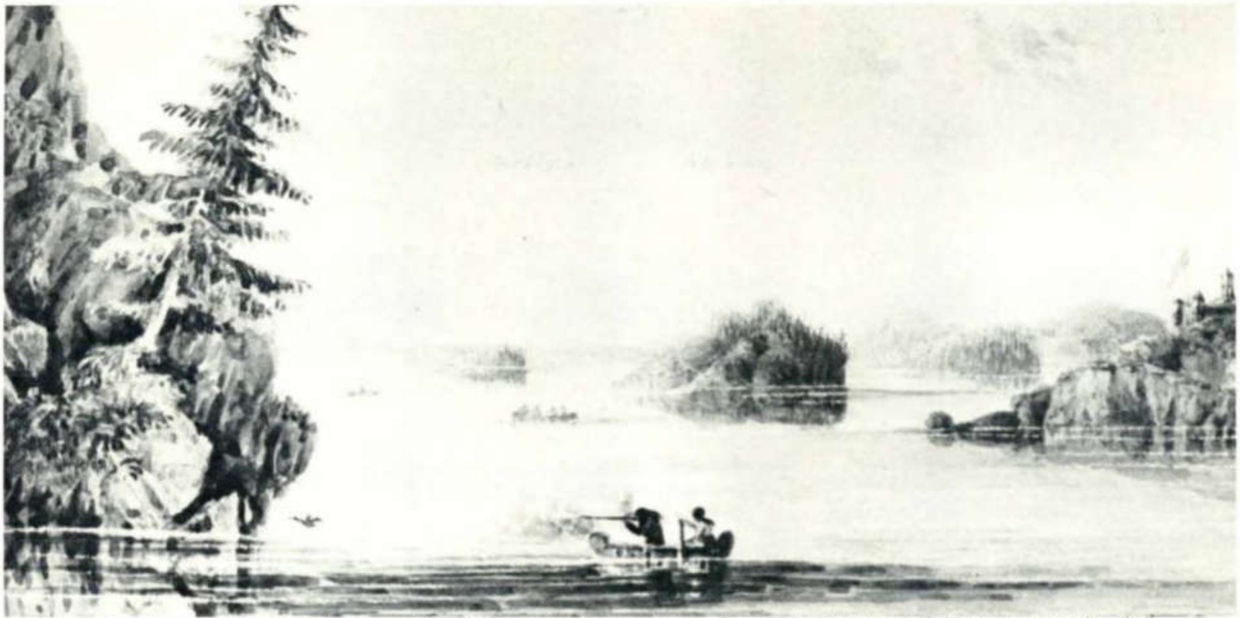
Athabasca, the Chipewyan no longer needed to make the long trek down to the Bayside. It was not until 1791 that Company servants managed to reach Athabasca to see for themselves the resources of the area and the extent of Canadian domination. Turnor recorded with some awe that the main North West post of Fort Chipewyan on Lake Athabasca, with its two years' stock of trading goods, was 'the compleatest Inland House I have seen in the Country'. Attempts by Malchom Ross, 'Master to the Northward'; David Thompson, and seaborne expeditions, to find a direct route from York or Churchill into the Athabasca country failed, and not until 1802 did Fidler establish the Company's first post there, at Nottingham House.

With the Company's resources strained in attempts to match the North Westers, the French wars from 1793 onwards came as a heavy blow. European wars had always brought their own difficulties to the Hudson's Bay Company, with problems of markets and credit, complications over convoys, and above all a shortage of manpower. The British navy's demand for seamen drew many Orkneymen into the service, and this hit the Company hard, for they were by now providing three-quarters of the work-force in the Bay—390 out of 498 officers and men in 1800. If David Thompson is to be believed, by about 1796 the Orkneymen reaching York in the annual ship were few in number and small in stature—so much so that the Indian wife of one of the Company servants challenged him with the observation: 'have you not always told me, that the people in your country are as numerous as the leaves on the trees, how can you speak such a falsehood, do we not all see plainly that the very last of them is come, if there were any more would these dwarfs have come here.' The Orkneymen, short or tall, emerge in the Company records with well-defined qualities which set them sharply apart from their Canadian counterparts with the North West Company. They had, as Hearne noted, a 'Clannish attachment to each other', and a canny appreciation of the worth of their labour. They were not prepared to accept the hardships of life in the interior for the wages payable for service at the Bayside, nor did they adapt easily to conditions inland. Unlike the Canadians, they insisted on taking ample provisions with them, and they proved reluctant to acquire new skills. On the whole, they did not make top-class officers, though there were exceptions. William Tomison, that craggy, difficult individual who supervised the Company's inland operations in these years, and Malchom Ross, a superb traveller and 'fine canoe Man equal allmost to any Indian', were both Orkneymen. Any attempt to evaluate the Orkneymen in this crucial period must take account of the fact that they were numerically inferior to the Canadians. Despite their shortcomings, they showed tenacity and endurance, and their dour approach suited well the grim, defensive struggle which the Hudson's Bay Company was waging


'Joseph Colen Esqr. Chief of York Factory', from an engraving done in 1796.

Fort William, where Montreal agents of the North West Company met each summer with the wintering partners. From a water-colour by Robert Irvine, c.1812.





'Fort Chipewyan—an Establishment of the N W. Co.'s on the Athabasca Lake—(North America)'. From a water-colour by George Back, c.1832; the original view probably taken during Back's stay at Fort Chipewyan in 1820.

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in these years.

As the Company faced problems of inadequate resources and uncertain objectives, its affairs betrayed the lack of commanding authority in the field. There was no equivalent of the personal consultation which took place each summer between the wintering partners and the Montreal agents of the North West Company at Grand Portage (and later at Fort William). Members of the London Committee never visited the Bay; as they once admitted, they 'had no sort of Clue' about many aspects of trade there. As long as the factories had been confined to the shores of the Bay direct if distant control from London had been possible; but once the Company servants moved inland along a bewildering network of waterways, setting up and abandoning posts almost year to year, then the disadvantages of rule from London became ever more obvious. In 1800 the London Committee wrote in irritation to its officers: 'Changing the Names of dependent Settlements not only mislead but often times perplex us when referring to the maps, let it therefore be avoided.' Even when it was able to locate its posts, not all the efforts of the Company surveyors could make the London Committee familiar with the terrain and conditions in the way that the North West partners were. As trade became fluid and shifting, so the delays in decision making became more noticeable and the effects more serious. Minor adjustments in London could have unforeseen effects several thousand miles away. Even consultation between officers in the Bay was difficult, since inland traders came down to different Bayside posts; and there were occasions when Churchill, York and Albany seemed to regard their inland posts as pawns in a strenuous internecine rivalry.

Despite these difficulties of organization, direction and resources the Company clung tenaciously to its task. In the expansion of posts, the development of more flexible techniques of trade and transportation, and the opening up of trade with the Blackfoot, Blood, Piegan and other Indians of the plains and mountains, the Company had advanced further in the generation following the first tentative move inland than in the previous hundred years. It is tempting to identify the more open-minded attitude with Samuel Wegg, whose governorship from 1780 to 1799 marked the only serious break during the eighteenth century of the long dominance of the London Committee by the Lake family (between 1710 and 1807 there were only eight years when a member of the Lake family was not either Governor or Deputy Governor). Certainly, his easy relations with the Admiralty and the Royal Society, as well as with many of the geographers and naturalists of the day, introduced a new and refreshing dimension to the management of the Company's affairs. It was entirely appropriate that when the results of the surveys by Turnor and the other Company explorers were widely publicized for the first time by Aaron Arrowsmith in his *Map Exhibiting all the New Discoveries in the Interior Parts of North America* of 1795, the cartographer should dedicate the great map 'To the Honorable Governor and Company of Adventurers of England Trading into Hudsons Bay In testimony of their liberal Communications'. But the Company's future depended on its effectiveness as a trading organization, not on the polite assistance it had rendered the geographers, scientists and ministers of the day; and in terms of manpower and volume of trade it was outdistanced by its Canadian rivals. As Tomison ruefully (and a little unfairly) remarked on the North Saskatchewan in 1794, 'It's true observation the Traders from Canada made to us the other day which was that the Hudsons Bay Company carried on this Trade as if it was drawn by a dead Horse.'

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VI. FUR-TRADE RIVALRY AND UNION

BY THE BEGINNING of the new century it seemed clear, at least to casual observers, that the future of the fur trade lay with the Canadians. In 1800 the North West Company shipped furs to Britain valued at £144,000; the Hudson's Bay Company a mere £38,000. By 1801 the latter's dividend had dropped to four per cent, and this was maintained only with difficulty. Of more menace to the North Westers appeared to be another Canadian rival, the 'New North West Company', or 'The XY Company'. Violence and intimidation became the order of the day, and the Hudson's Bay men were struck many glancing blows in the resultant struggle. On fixed salaries (though supplemented with gratuities and premiums), and with strict orders to avoid clashes, they were buffeted about in the fierce trade war which now erupted between men whose personal careers and fortunes depended on the amount of furs they obtained from the Indians.

The intensity of competition increased the disruptive effect which the westward spread of the traders had already had on the interior Indians. As the Canadians and Hudson's Bay men moved onto the Saskatchewan, so the Western Cree and Assiniboine lost their function as middlemen in the trade, and drifted to the plains beyond the North Saskatchewan, where they kept their links with the companies, but rather as buffalo hunters and provisioners. Their former territories around Red River and the lower Assiniboine were taken over by Ojibwa, moving westward in turn as their old trapping grounds became exhausted. During this period serious inroads were made on the fur and game resources of much of the western interior as trapping and hunting were carried on with an unprecedented intensity. In its Saskatchewan District the Hudson's Bay Company reported in 1801 that the Canadian companies had brought in three hundred Iroquois on three-year contracts who were completely clearing the area of beaver. There were also free traders operating individually or in small groups, described by one Hudson's Bay man as 'those Interlopers of the Trade who like the Locusts of Egypt bring Devestation & Ruin along with them.'

The trading practices of the earlier period—the acknowledged status of Indian leaders or captains, advances of trade goods and provisions, collection of debts—had developed in a situation of fixed posts and regular visits by known trading bands. The proliferation of inland posts (twenty-five of them in 1795 on the Assiniboine River alone), many of them temporary, and the number of competing traders, removed the old framework of the trade. The Indian trading bands tended to be smaller, so there were more leaders to be treated with presents. Collecting debts became more difficult. And so trade costs mounted, for as the North Wester Duncan McGillivray noted, 'In the seat of an Opposition profusion is absolutely necessary to secure the trade of an Indian.' Competition brought benefits to the Indians in the shape of cheaper goods, but other manifestations of trade instability included a dramatic increase in the amount of alcohol traded. High-quality goods were still essential, but they were not enough on their own. As far as the Hudson's Bay Company was concerned, its former policy of trying to restrict spirits to ceremonial occasions and to the trading of certain prime furs, disappeared from view as its traders moved inland to compete with the Canadians. It is from this period that many of the well-known descriptions in the fur-trade narratives of the devastating impact of alcohol on the Indians date; and in the scenes of violent debauchery which often accompanied trading activities the lives and goods of the traders were also sometimes at risk. Even without that danger there was a dimension now to the trade which disgusted some of the participants. Thomas Staynor wrote in his journal at South Branch House:

> I cannot but take Notice of the hardship I think an Inland Master is under when he is compelled to sit up Night after Night to attend to this Drunken Sots & serve out Liquor to them which it is true is all to the Company's Interest, for without that many a skin would go to our Neighbours that now comes to us.

Another result of closer contact with the Europeans was the major smallpox epidemic of the 1780s, which spread from the Upper Missouri, across the Cree, Assiniboine and Ojibwa regions, and in the end reached Chipewyan lands to the north. There, the arrival of the Canadian traders in Athabasca was in any case bringing radical changes to the lifestyle of the Indians. Previous Chipewyan contact with European traders had been through the trading bands which visited Churchill, but those journeys were secondary to the following of the migratory caribou herds which provided the main food supply of the Chipewyan. The ravages of smallpox, the availability of Canadian trade goods, and the destruction of Churchill by the French, broke the Chipewyan link with the Bayside for some years. In the mid-1780s David Thompson noted that 'The whole of the furs collected at Churchill barely loaded the ships long boat.' The steady increase of North Wester strength in Athabasca as the depot at Fort Chipewyan swelled in size, and trade extended northwards to the lower Mackenzie and Peace rivers, brought new demands on the Chipewyan for furs

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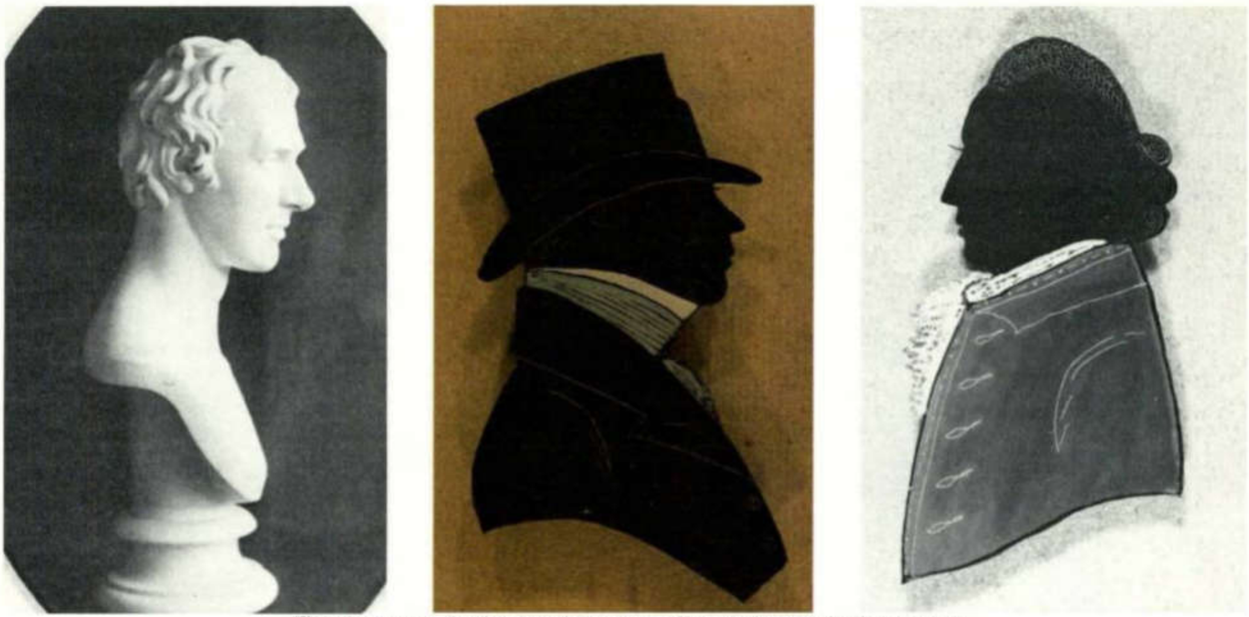
In 1800 it seemed that the future of the fur trade lay with the North West Company. North Westers Alexander Mackenzie (left) and Simon McGillivray, however, were concerned about long and difficult trade routes and collection of debts.

and provisions. The intensification of competition as the XY Company arrived in Athabasca in 1799, followed by the Hudson's Bay Company in 1802, increased the sharpness of these demands, and led to a worsening of the already indifferent relations between the North West Company traders and the Chipewyan, relatively immune to the temptations of alcohol. Beatings and killings, quarrels over women, the taking of hostages, became commonplace. By the time that the XY Company had ceased independent operations (in 1804) and the Hudson's Bay Company had withdrawn from Athabasca (in 1806), many of the Chipewyan had abandoned the fur trade, and were returning to a lifestyle based on the caribou hunt. In the long term the inability of the North West Company to establish a stable relationship either with the Chipewyan, or with the Beaver Indians and other Athapaskan tribes farther north, was to have serious effects on its trade.

In the early years of the century, however, the North West Company was dominant. Its union with the XY Company in 1804 led to a turning of combined forces against the Hudson's Bay Company in many areas. The plight of the Company servants at the Bottom of the Bay was only worse in degree than that in other parts of the fur-trade country. From 1803 to 1807 the North Westers 'invaded' James Bay, set up posts on its shores supplied by sea, while inland, as the factor at Albany reported, 'they have poured in such a number of traders' that 'we act generally on the defensive and live in hopes'. The exchange of mutual courtesies between adjoining posts which had marked the earlier period had largely vanished. The building up of the Hudson's Bay counter-challenge towards and across the height of land led to violence which culminated in the shooting dead of a North Wester at Eagle Lake in 1809 as he was (in the Hudson's Bay Company version of events) 'cutting our men down the same as cabbage stalks'. At the same time, in London there were North Wester attempts to gain control of the Company. The main prize at stake was the Bay route. Control of this would allow the North Westers to avoid the heavy customs duties paid on furs shipped via Quebec, and would give them a shorter route to the Northwest. As they pushed towards and across the Rockies, the length and difficulty of the river routes from Montreal became an increasing worry. Alexander Mackenzie pointed out that it was 2,750 miles from Montreal to Athabasca, the jumping-off point for the Mackenzie basin and the far Northwest; and this simple fact of geography hardened his conviction that amalgamation between the Canadian traders and the Hudson's Bay Company was essential.

In wartime Britain and in North America, Company morale drooped. Many of the old fur areas were being trapped bare in the reckless competition for skins, and although the Company managed to maintain the number of furs exported from the Bay the costs increased yearly. The Company had to face the unpalatable fact that the number of men at the inland posts was now decided, not so much by trading requirements, as by the necessity of defence against the North Westers. In 1809 the Company could not pay a dividend; its trade was being financed on credit, with Committee members often having to provide ready cash, and it had a heavy overdraft of £50,000 at the bank. With unsold furs piling up in the warehouses as Napoleon's continental blockade closed the markets of Europe there was gloomy talk of a temporary withdrawal from the fur trade. At this point important changes on the London Committee brought a new spirit and firmer objectives to the management of the Company's affairs. Andrew Wedderburn (better known from



The triumverate who dominated Company affairs in the period prior to union: Thomas Douglas, fifth Earl of Selkirk (left), Andrew Wedderburn Colvile, and his brother-in-law John Halkett.

1814 as Colvile) had joined the Committee, and was soon followed by his brother-in-law John Halkett. In place of defeatist schemes for giving up the fur trade, Colvile persuaded the Committee to adopt his 'Retrenching' or 'New System'—a comprehensive plan of reorganization aimed at encouraging efficiency, economy and incentive.

On the administrative level the Company's trade was split into two Departments, Northern and Southern, each containing Districts which supervised the individual posts. The Northern Department consisted of the Districts of York, Churchill, Saskatchewan and Winnipeg; the Southern of Albany, Moose and Eastmain. Accompanying this more precise chain of command came increased flexibility in the handling of the trade. Although masters of posts were expected to live as far as possible off the country, they were allowed to fix their own standard of trade with the Indians. No longer need they struggle to observe 'with a kind of religious veneration' a standard decided in London—and they were to share in half the profits of the trade. This move towards individual initiative and responsibility would, it was hoped, stiffen the attitude of the Hudson's Bay men towards the Canadian opposition. Although the Committee frowned on unnecessary violence, and thought the time not yet ripe for an onslaught on the North Westers' position in Athabasca, it was sharply critical of the 'abject submission' sometimes shown by Company servants in the past, and advocated instead a 'determined firmness'.

The Committee was the less inclined to risk a contest in Athabasca at this stage since it was deeply committed to an even more ambitious project—the establishment of a settlement colony at Red River. The third member of the triumverate which dominated the Company's affairs in these years was Thomas Douglas, fifth Earl of Selkirk, for long an enthusiastic advocate of planned emigration from the distressed areas of Ireland and Scotland. As early as 1802 he had suggested the possibility of a colony in the fertile valley of the Red River, and although his attention was then diverted to other areas of North America, in 1808 and 1809 he was busy buying (at inflated prices) the depressed Hudson's Bay stock. In 1810 he put a formal proposition to the Company which dovetailed neatly with the Retrenching System being introduced by his brother-in-law Colvile, who had been dismayed to discover the cost of sending out provisions from England to the Company posts. If a colony was established at Red River then, as the London Committee later explained to the Colonial Office, 'the Company expected that they would obtain a certain supply of provisions at a moderate price'. In 1811 the Hudson's Bay Company granted Selkirk in fee simple for the nominal sum of ten shillings a tract of 116,000 square miles in the Winnipeg basin. Stretching in a north-south direction from Lake Winnipeg to the height of land between the Red River and Mississippi drainage systems, and east-west from within fifty miles of Grand Portage to the sources of the Assiniboine and Qu'Appelle rivers, the area was to be known as Assiniboia, or the Red River Colony.

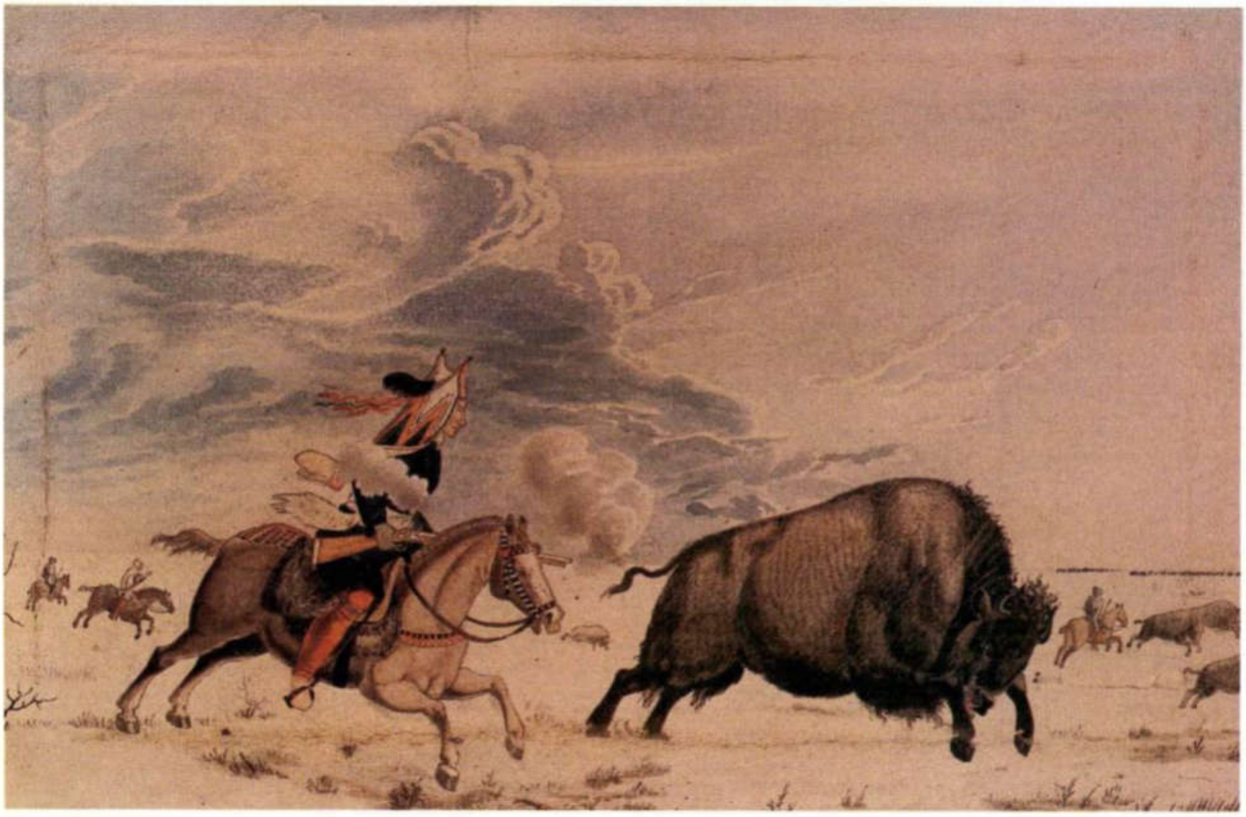
Neither the idea of a settlement colony nor of agricultural development within the Company's territory was altogether new; but Selkirk's scheme could not be divorced from the fur-trade rivalry of the period, and here lay the root of much of the tension and violence of the next decade. Both companies were faced with rising costs as a result of their mutual competition and the increase in posts and servants which accompanied their lengthening lines of communications (which in the case of the North West Company now stretched to the

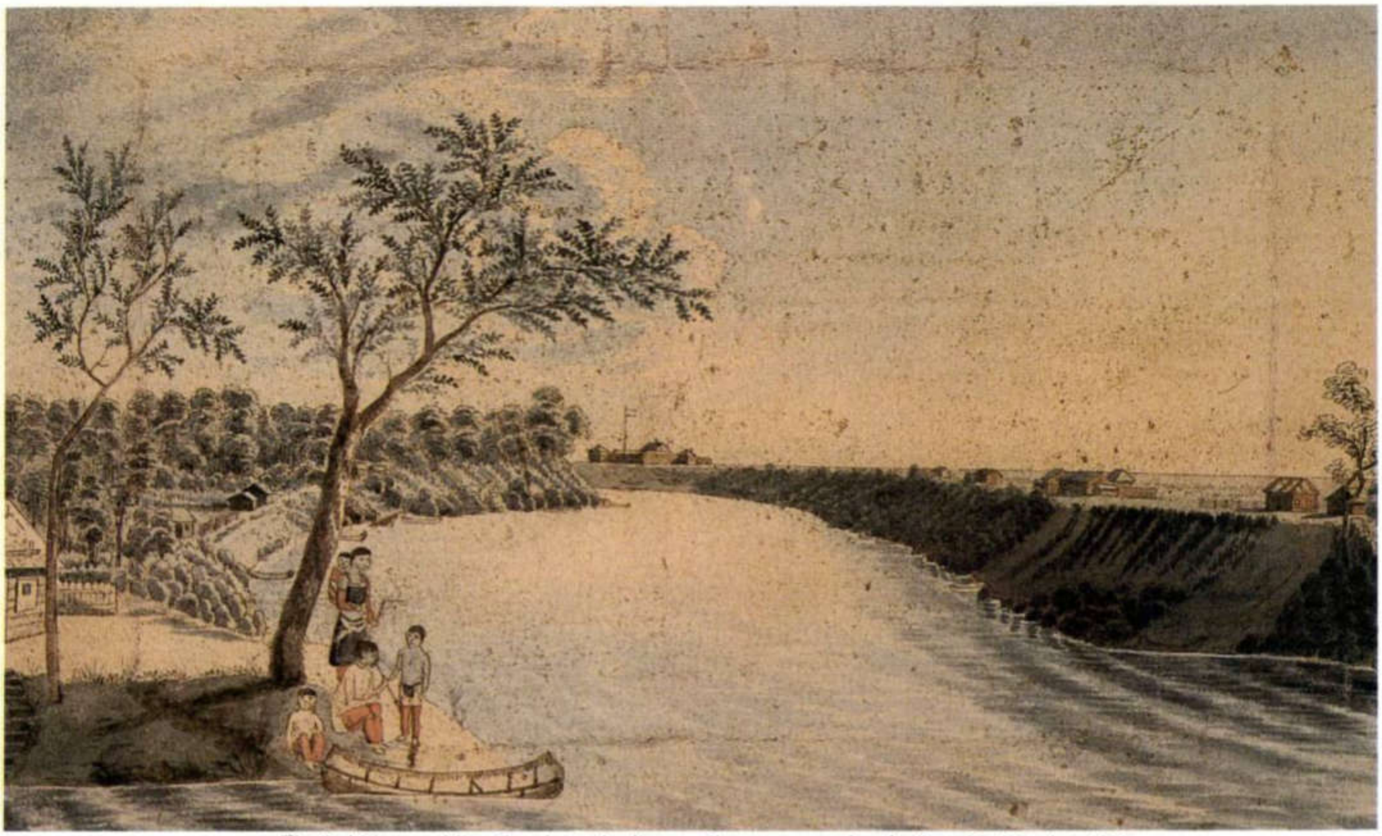
Columbia). An important part of Colvile's Retrenching System was the reduction of imported provisions, not only to the western posts but even to stations at and near the Bayside. To live off the country was a more attractive proposition to the economy-minded London Committee than it was to many of its servants in the field, not all of whom possessed the qualities of skill and resourcefulness which the new system demanded. The journal kept by the North Wester Angus Cameron at Fort Timiskaming shows that his Hudson's Bay opponents who set up a rival post near him in 1814 were often near starvation, and had to beg food from him. He has a description of the sad figure of James Kellock, the clerk in charge of the Hudson's Bay post, a 'Phantom of a Hunter', 'such a ridiculous figure I never beheld in the Indian country at any rate, altho' half famished with Hunger, upon a Huge pair of snow Shoes, that his Spindle shanks can hardly trail along'. In the end, Cameron took pity on his rivals, though not without first subjecting them to a lecture to the effect that 'they cannot plead any acts of Humanity in their favour Since they tamely Submit to the Barbarous System of Starvation that their Savage Employers had Established'.

Along the height of land between Lake Superior and James Bay Angus Cameron held sway, but it was not in this trampled battleground of the fur trade but further west that the struggle between the two companies would be decided. In general, the North Westers, with their long haul from the St Lawrence to the fur regions of the West, and their lavish establishments of Canadian, Indian and Métis servants (often with large families) were the more affected by the spiralling expenses of the trade. Again, though both companies were heavily dependent on the buffalo meat of the plains, it was the North West Company with its large number of posts (seventy-eight according to David Thompson's map of 1814) and massed canoe brigades which was the more vulnerable to any threat to its supplies. It was precisely this threat which Selkirk's planned colony posed, for Assiniboia was the main source of buffalo pemmican for the North Westers. Across the plains of Assiniboia and Qu'Appelle the buffalo were hunted down by the Indians and the Métis. After the women had dressed, dried and pounded it, the meat was mixed with grease and stowed in ninety-pound bags of buffalo hide to form the staple food of the brigades.

The establishment of an agricultural colony at Red River held ominous implications for the North West Company, already under strain, and feeling almost for the first time the pinch of competition from its smaller rival. Nor could it ignore the rumours that, concurrent with Selkirk's scheme, and perhaps linked to it, the Hudson's Bay Company was contemplating a new push into the very heart of its trade in Athabasca. As Simon

Buffalo pemmican, the staple food of the North Wester brigades, was threatened by the proposed agricultural settlement at Red River. The hunt by Indians and Métis was portrayed by Peter Rindisbacher, 1823.





The Red River, and Fort Douglas in the distance. From a water-colour by Peter Rindisbacher, 1822.

McGillivray wrote to the wintering partners in 1812 of Selkirk and his project, *'he must be driven to abandon it,* for his success would strike at the very existence of the trade.' Although Selkirk had been granted absolute proprietorship over the area of his grant, the connections between the colony and the Hudson's Bay Company were unmistakable. The settlement was to provide the Company with 200 settlers annually; the first recruits for Red River signed for service with the Company (in order to bring them under some form of discipline); the colony's first governor, Miles Macdonell, was given a commission by the Company. The distinction between colony and Company was a fine one, and not one which the North Westers could be expected to comprehend or accept.

The potentialities for conflict were glimpsed when Macdonell and the first colonists reached Red River in September 1812 and picked as the centre of the settlement Point Douglas on the west bank, only a mile or so away from the North West Company post at Fort Gibraltar. Although at first relations between the North Westers and the settlers were amicable enough, the dangers of the situation became clearer month by month as more settlers arrived with interests obviously at variance with those of the fur traders. The suspicions of the North Westers about the new venture were confirmed when Macdonell in January 1814 prohibited the export of provisions from Assiniboia, and followed this with the seizure of pemmican at the North West post at La Souris. Although the 'pemmican war' was soon settled, the vulnerability of the North Westers' position had been revealed. The weakness of their legal standing in the face of a Company which through its charter claimed ownership of the soil was further exposed when Macdonell served formal notice to quit on the North West Company posts; and that this was a legal device to protect Selkirk's title to the territory rather than a serious threat of expulsion was not likely to cushion the threat to traders who had long dominated the region.

As tension grew, the North Westers embarked on a campaign of harassment against the little settlements along the banks of the Red River, and they found willing if unpredictable allies in the Métis. Many of these had served the company as *voyageurs,* and now made their living supplying the brigades with pemmican. Loyalty to the North West Company was as inbred as hostility towards the Englishmen and Orkneymen of the Hudson's Bay Company, and they watched Macdonell's actions with increasing resentment. His prohibition of the running of buffalo by horsemen near the settlement, for example, they regarded as an encroachment on their rights, a threat to their very way of life. On the intimidated settlers the hostility and turbulence of the situation had a demoralizing effect, and in the summer of 1815 the colony was saved only by a chance meeting at Lake Winnipeg between the departing settlers and Colin Robertson with a Hudson's Bay brigade bound for Athabasca. Robertson's appearance marked the determination of the Hudson's Bay Company to launch an attack on the North Westers' trade in Athabasca. The London Committee was helped to its decision by an analysis of its trade which revealed the unexpected information that the inland stations, facing competition, were more profitable than the sheltered posts at or near the Bayside. Opposition apparently provided a stimulus rather than a deterrent, and this discovery helped to brace the Company for the inevitable clash which would follow its return to Athabasca.

Financially, the Company was in better shape to mount such a venture than it had been in 1809–10, for fur sales had recovered in the last years of the Napoleonic Wars, and more money was available for wages and supplies. Robertson, once a North Wester himself, found his men for the expedition among Canadian *voyageurs* in Montreal, and his attempt to disguise his real objective by talk of recruitment for Red River hardened North Wester feelings against the colony. Further evidence of the links between colony and Company came with the appointment in 1815 of Robert Semple as Governor of

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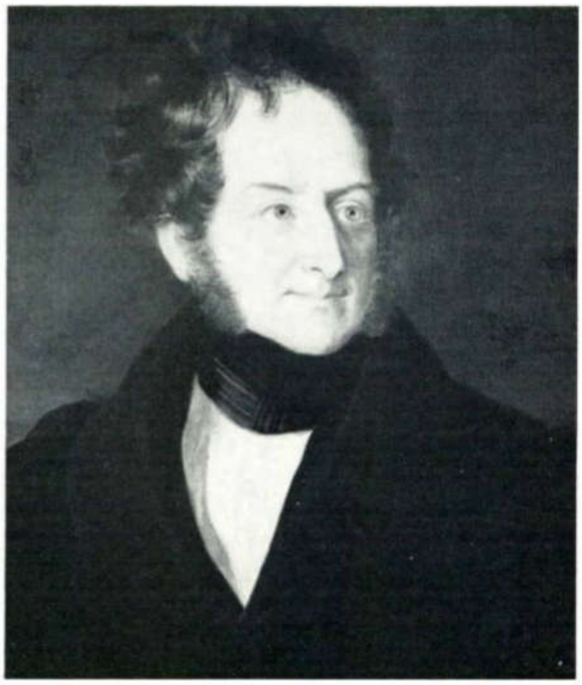
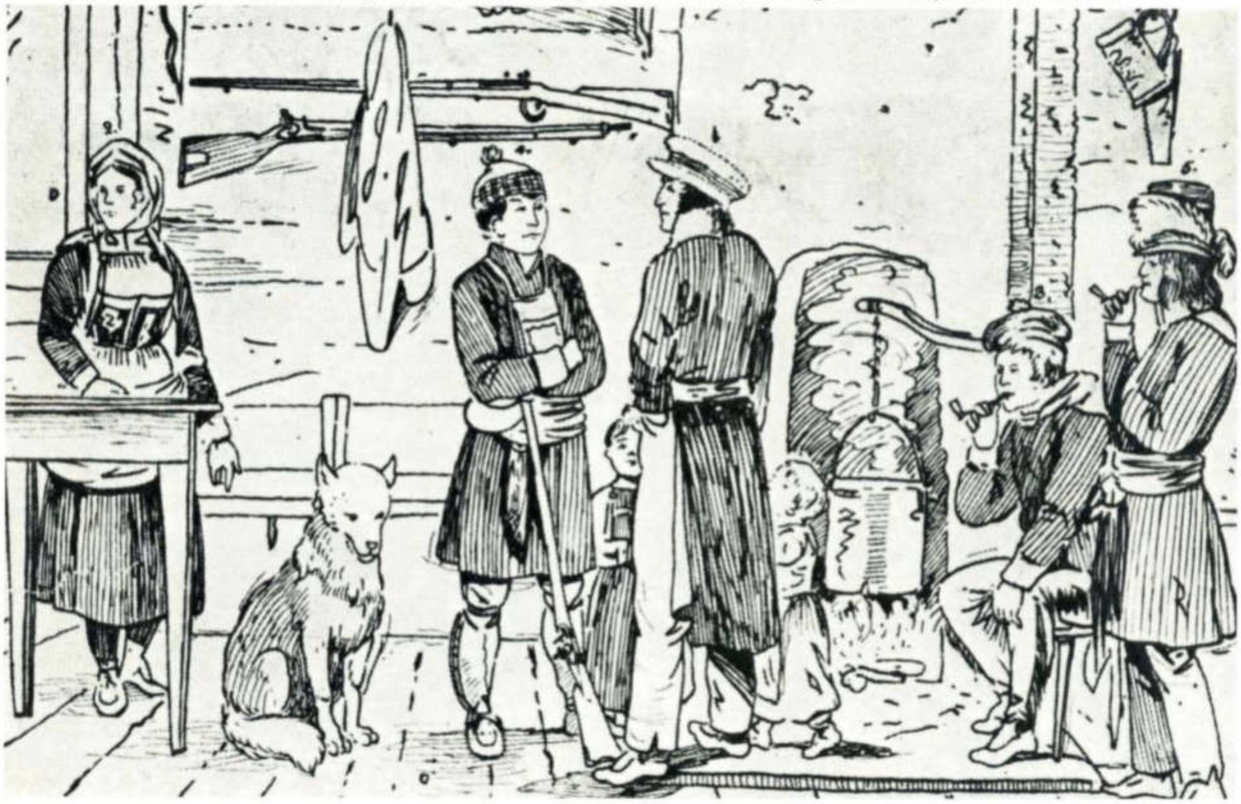


Colin Robertson.

'Types of Lord Selkirk's Settlers in 1822. 1, 2. A Swiss colonist with wife and children from the Canton of Berne. 3. A German colonist from the disbanded De Meuron Regiment. 4. A Scottish Highland colonist. 5. An immigrant colonist from French Canada.'



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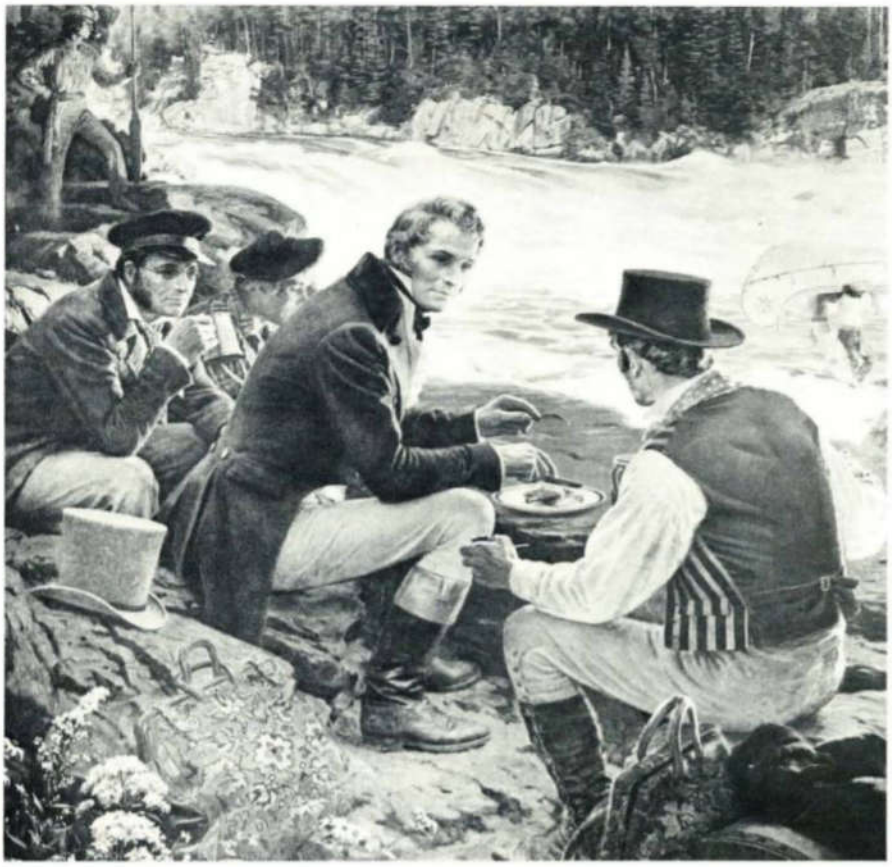
Robert Semple, appointed Governor of the Hudson's Bay Territories in 1815 and killed in the skirmish at Seven Oaks in June 1816.

Rupert's Land, wielding authority over Red River, and the Northern and Southern Departments. At Red River Robertson entrusted the task of taking the brigade into Athabasca to another former North Wester, John Clarke, and turned to an energetic harrying of the North Westers around the settlement in pursuit of his policy of 'Opposition as these men understand it'. But 1816, which began full of promise for the colony and the Company's trade, brought tragedy and death on a scale unprecedented in the fur trade, where even the sternest competition had stopped short of killings on any scale. In Athabasca John Clarke, short of provisions, was faced with the hostility of the dominant North Westers, and lost sixteen men through starvation. At Red River twenty-two settlers, including Semple, were killed in an attack by the Métis in June, and within three days the surviving settlers had abandoned the colony. The events of 1816 gave a new edge to the rivalry between the two companies which was to end with a complete remodelling of the Canadian fur trade.

The first effect of the massacre at Seven Oaks was to bring down a heavy retaliation onto the North Westers. Selkirk, after failing to obtain British military support for the colony, was on his way to Red River with a force of discharged Swiss and German soldiers from the De Meuron regiment when he heard the news. Hurrying on to the North Westers' headquarters at Fort William, Selkirk and his private army seized the fort and arrested several of the partners. The next year he reached Red River, regained Fort Douglas and restored the settlement. Despite governmental disapproval of his counter-violence, and the damaging nature of the subsequent legal proceedings in which he became enmeshed, Selkirk had redressed the balance. In Robertson's exultant words, he had 'completely laid the axe at the root of the North West influence and jurisdiction in this part of the country'. The same vigour was shown by Robertson himself as he resumed his mission to Athabasca where Clarke, despite being arrested three times by the North Westers, managed to hold out until reinforcements arrived. These came in 1818 when Robertson took in 27 canoes with more than 180 officers and men. The Hudson's Bay Company, reported one of its opponents, had appeared 'in overwhelming force'. It was a far cry from the days when expansion had to be justified by profits, and an expedition of a dozen men was regarded as an ambitious venture. The expedition opened up damaging gaps in the North Westers' apparently impregnable position in Athabasca, where they could no longer afford to fight off serious competition.

Under strain the traditional alliance within the North West Company between the wintering partners and the Montreal agents was beginning to disintegrate. There had always been an underlying tension between those who endured the hardships of the trade and those who reaped most of the profits; but the events of these years led to mutual recriminations on a scale hitherto unknown. The winterers were angered at the way in which Robertson's first Athabasca expedition had slipped unhindered out of Montreal, while among both groups there were men, hardened in fur-trade rivalry, who were uneasy about the war on settler families, and concerned about the increasing violence and cost of the competition for furs. A further blow to the North Westers' organization and prestige came in 1819, when the new Governor of Rupert's Land, William Williams, ambushed the wintering partners at the Grand Rapid of the Saskatchewan. These arrests by a force armed with cannon as well as small arms seemed to presage an intensification of the private war between the companies, and the episode did nothing to improve North Wester morale. The annual meeting between agents and wintering partners at Fort William in 1820 made the usual arrangements to get the brigades away to Athabasca (where the latest Hudson's Bay recruit, George Simpson, was about to take charge of the rival company's posts), but they reached no decision on the long-term future of their operations. Although their partnership agreement with the agents was due to expire in 1822, the wintering partners showed little disposition to sign a new one, and instead were hinting at an independent approach to the Hudson's Bay Company.

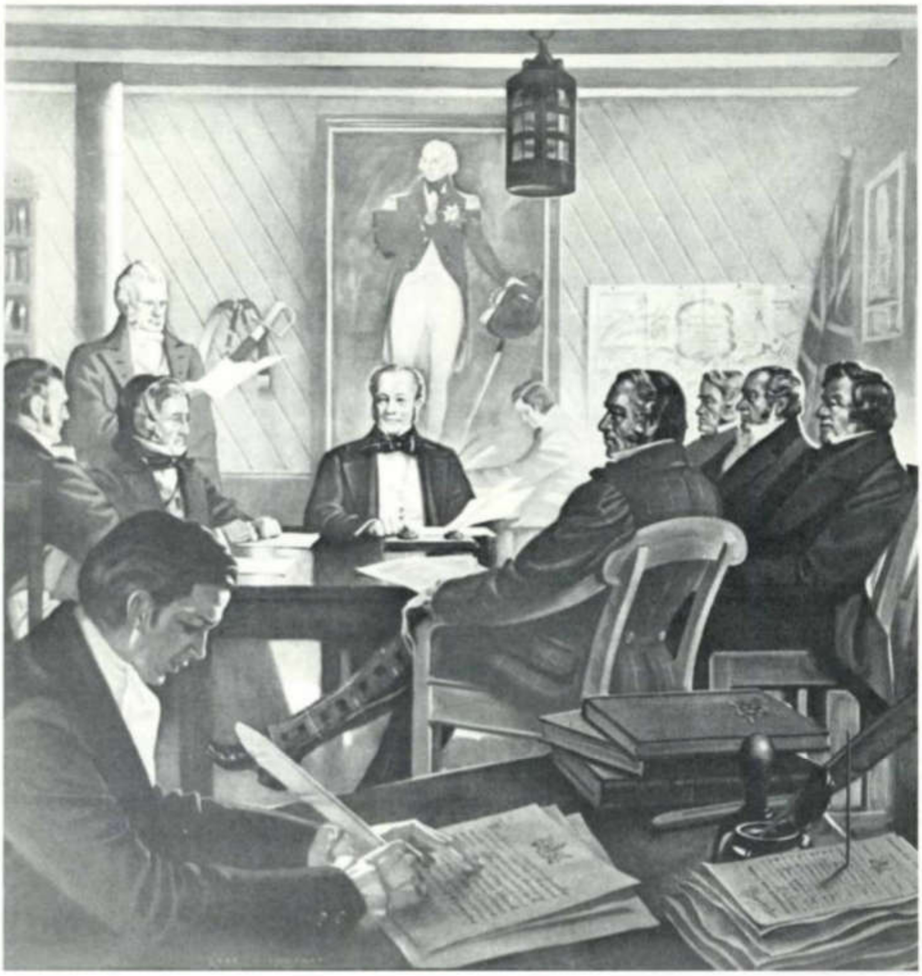
The negotiations which now took place in London were not a simple, bilateral affair. The North West Company was represented by separate delegations for the wintering partners and the agents. Edward Ellice, London agent for the North West Company, and a Member of Parliament with influence at the Colonial



After coalition in 1821, Nicholas Garry, a London director of the Hudson's Bay Company, was appointed to reconcile differences between the fur-trade officers of both companies. Here he travels west with North Wester Simon McGillivray (with glasses), and Chief Factor James Bird, right, of the Hudson's Bay Company. From a painting by Rex Woods for the Hudson's Bay Company.

Office, seems to have played an important mediatory role. Certainly the British government, aware of the deteriorating situation in the Canadian West, was anxious to see some sort of settlement. This was easier to reach than it might otherwise have been because of the death of Selkirk in April 1820, and the financial weakness of both companies. The North West Company was suffering from the casual flexibility of structure which had once been its strength. Since it distributed its profits annually, in hard times it had no reserve fund, and its financial losses had a direct impact on the wintering partners. Although the Hudson's Bay Company did not show such acute signs of distress, its overdraft stood at its maximum permitted level of £75,000. Neither side had enough confidence in its own strength to want a prolongation of the struggle. The Hudson's Bay Company was far from convinced that it was winning the day in Athabasca; the North West Company was doubtful whether it could survive its internal dissensions for many more months. A complex and often urgent set of pressures brought the agreement of 1821.

The settlement stipulated that from June 1821 a twenty-one-year agreement would place the trade of both companies in the hands of a remodelled Hudson's Bay Company. A royal licence later in the year granted the new concern a monopoly, also for twenty-one years, of the fur trade of British North America, except for the provinces of Upper and Lower Canada, and Rupert's Land (in the latter the Company was held to retain exclusive trade rights through its original charter). The Hudson's Bay Company would dominate an area of more than three million square miles—in effect modern Canada from Ontario to the Pacific. The annual profits of the new undertaking were to be divided into one hundred shares: twenty to the Hudson's Bay Company proprietors, twenty to the North West Company proprietors, forty to the traders in the field, and the remaining twenty split between Selkirk's heirs, Simon McGillivray and Edward Ellice (to compensate for the loss of their London agency), and a reserve fund. William McGillivray strove to put the best face he could on the agreement by pointing out that fifty-five of the shares in the new concern were held by North Westers, but this was to ignore the disunity in the Canadian ranks before the coalition, and the increasing difficulties which the Montreal agents continued to face. Of the old North West agents only Ellice found a place on the Committee of the Hudson's Bay Company, which through all the changes



The council of the Northern Department at Norway House, 21 June 1836. Commissioned officers, left to right: Chief Factor John Charles, Chief Factor Peter Warren Dease (standing), Chief Factor Allan McDonell, Governor George Simpson, Chief Factor Donald Ross, Chief Factor John Rowand, Chief Trader Richard Grant and Chief Trader William Todd. A clerk is seated, left foreground. From a painting by Charles Comfort for the Hudson's Bay Company.

had retained its London organization, its name and charter, and its rights to the soil of Rupert's Land.

This is not to say that the new Hudson's Bay Company was simply an enlarged version of the old; after 1821 the North Westers contributed much to it in method as well as personnel. The term coalition is not a misnomer. Two of the most distinctive features of the North West Company were recognized in the 1821 settlement: the formal financial partnership of the traders, and the regular participation of these partners in the management of commercial operations. The Deed Poll of 1821 named those traders from among the old wintering partners of the North West Company and the field officers of the Hudson's Bay Company who were to be given the status of partner with a share in the profits of the trade. Two ranks were designated: Chief Factors, of whom there were to be twenty-five, and Chief Traders, whose number was fixed at twenty-eight. Of the total of fifty-three officers or 'commissioned gentlemen', thirty-two were North Westers. As in the old North West Company, the financial relationship between the traders in the field, and the directors and shareholders, was given a legal basis. On the management side the same principle was introduced, for in each of the two regional departments, Northern and Southern, between which the trade was divided the Chief Factors were to meet in council with their Governors once a year. The North West Company had long known such an arrangement with its annual meetings at Fort William, and since the reorganizations of 1810 the Hudson's Bay Company had been experimenting with the use of a general council to support its senior officer in the field. The merit of the agreement was that it embraced the most important figures and influences within both companies, and had produced a comprehensive settlement intended to be permanent and productive. To argue which side 'won' becomes a profitless exercise in the end, since the fortunes of the joint concern were to be determined as much by the personalities and events of the new era as by the framework of the 1821 settlement.

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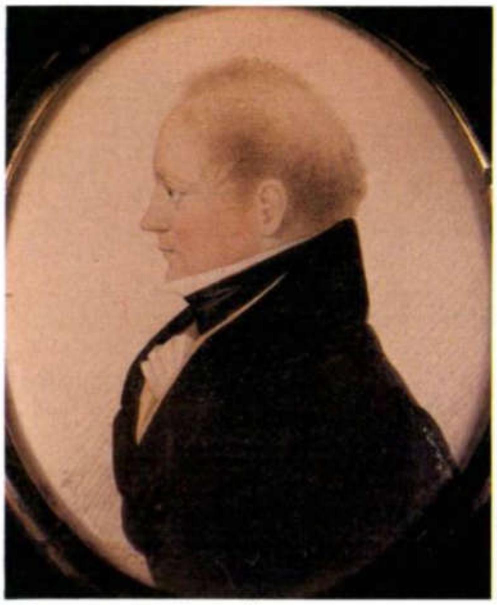
VII. THE SIMPSON ERA


Courtesy of Mrs M. Porritt

George Simpson.

THE UNION OF 1821 brought formal peace to the troubled fur-trade regions, but they remained strewn with what Frederick Merk has aptly termed 'the wreckage of battle'. The sudden end of rivalry made nonsense of the trading structures which the two companies had built. There were surplus posts and personnel, and over-lavish trading practices. Prices paid to the Indians had risen during the years of competition, and alcohol traded with irresponsible abandon. Trapping had been carried out at all seasons, of young as well as of adult animals, and many areas were now denuded of furs. The new Hudson's Bay Company had inherited in the west, trading areas on the Pacific slope which brought it into contact with unfamiliar American and Russian rivals; in the east its acquisition of a trading region centred on Montreal led to conflict with private Canadian trappers. A programme of reorganization and retrenchment was urgently needed, and it had to be introduced in an atmosphere of tension and mistrust between traders who until the spring of 1821 had been antagonists in a bitter struggle for survival.

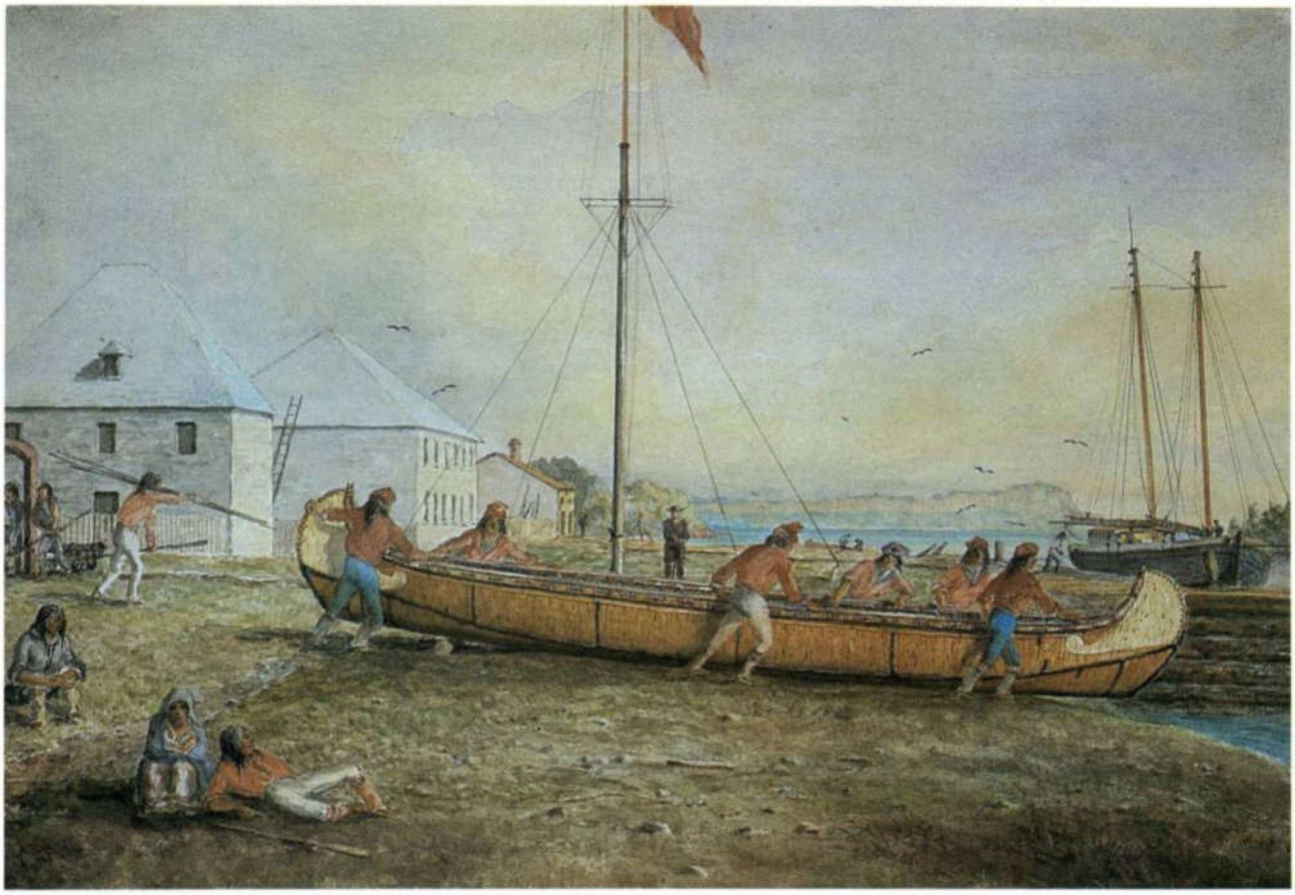
The dominant figure in the post-coalition period was George Simpson. Aged about thirty-five at the time of union, but still a novice in terms of fur-trade experience, Simpson was appointed Governor of the Northern Department, largest and most important of the remodelled Company's administrative divisions. The area placed under Simpson's control stretched from Hudson Bay across the Rockies, and from the American border to the Arctic. Here Simpson was first to show those qualities of administrative ability, resourcefulness and toughness which were to stamp themselves on the operations of the Hudson's Bay Company during the next forty years. The problem of surplus personnel was met by allowing senior officers to retire on favourable terms, and by discharging unsatisfactory servants or those with large (and expensive) families; and within five years the Northern Department had shed sixty per cent of its labour force. Throughout the area of the Company's operations the total of about 2,000 regular employees taken over in 1821 was cut to less than 700 by 1826, though this figure was to rise again (to 1,140 in 1839, 1,565 in 1845) as the Company's trading activities expanded.

In the vital matters of transport and communications Simpson showed great energy if not always impeccable judgement in prospecting and recommending new routes. Canoes were replaced with the more economical and reliable boats wherever possible, and in one of the most significant results of the 1821 amalgamation the North Wester's depot of Fort William was run down, and Athabasca was instead supplied from York Factory by boat—clear evidence of the triumph of the Hudson Bay route over the St Lawrence. Simpson pursued with especial zeal the Company's efforts to eliminate the trading of alcohol with the Indians. In 1822 he abolished the use of spirits in the trade north of Cumberland House, and although the process took longer in the areas of competition, he was able to report to the Parliamentary Select Committee in 1857 that on an annual basis over the previous ten years '1,630 gallons is all that is allotted for the use of our own servants, for an occasional dram to Indians who are employed in transport with our own servants, and for the purchase of provisions in parts of the country where we cannot get them otherwise.' Under Simpson the principles of sensible fur-trade management were clearly defined. They were those of an earlier period, before the worst excesses of cut-throat rivalry had brought disorder and extravagance to the scene. In the areas safe from competition the emphasis was on controlled trapping, a paternal attitude to the Indians, and high profits. In the frontier regions such as the Snake country there was a determination to beat back rivals regardless of cost—as Simpson put it late in his career, 'it has always been a maxim with us, that the Compy. are able to pay as high as any other party'.

Over and above the enforcement of general policy as laid down by the London Committee, Simpson brought to the fur trade his own particular insistence on the virtues of economy and regularity. His tireless journeying across the Company's domains gave him ample opportunity to check the often slipshod, haphazard methods of the old traders—'abuses which nothing but my own presence can effectually stop', as he once said. In physical endurance Simpson could match any of his traders, and this was a matter of personal pride and public commitment. 'The example I show them of a total disregard to personal ease and comfort does much good.' The period has many stories of the exploits of the stocky, purposeful figure as he moved swiftly from place to place in his light canoe, investigating, probing, recommending and sometimes dismissing. When well into his fifties, he reduced to total exhaustion two British army officers incautious enough to accompany him by canoe to Red River, only to find that Simpson's day on the trail began before 2 a.m. and was 'divided into six hours of rest and eighteen of labour'. An observer of their tattered arrival at the settlement told how 'one of them, an old Peninsular Campaigner declared that had he drilled his soldiers as severely as the Gov^{r} had them on the march—they would have shot him in five days.' Whether one judges Simpson in terms of his mastery of detail and prodigious memory, his ability to discern the main lines of business efficiency and expansion, or his ceaseless movements across the Company's territories, he dominated his contemporaries in the fur trade. His achievements in the years after coalition stood in sharp contrast to the difficulties encountered by his fellow governor, William Williams, as he grappled with the problems of the Southern Department; and in 1826 the London Committee extended Simpson's authority to cover that department and the Montreal-based posts. He had become in effect the Company's overseas governor, though he had to wait until 1839 before the appropriate title of Governor-in-Chief of Rupert's Land was formally bestowed upon him.

As Simpson's authority and prestige grew, so the Councils of Chief Factors (which in both departments

Sir George Simpson's canoe at Fort William. From a water-colour by William Armstrong, 1862.



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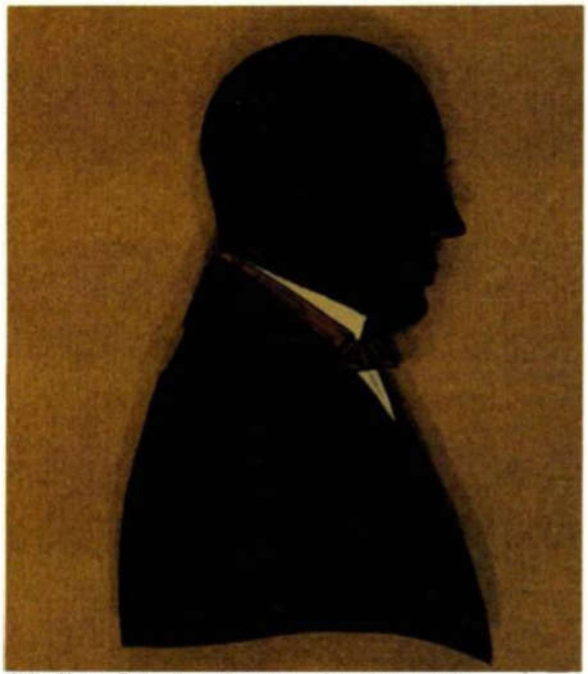
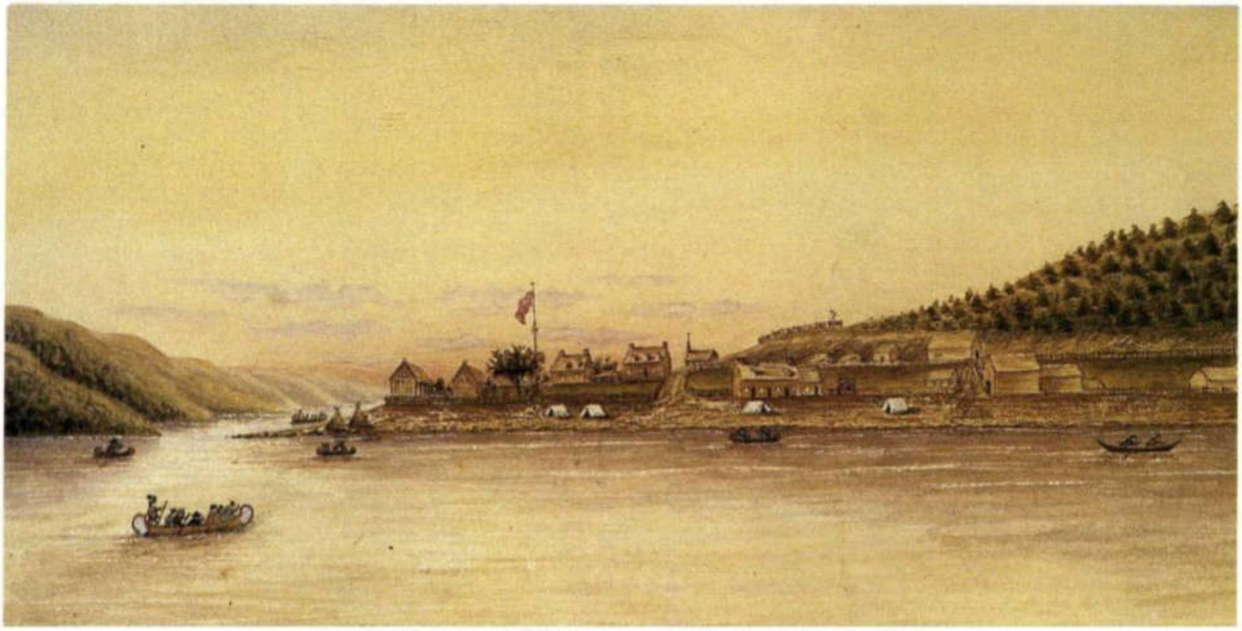


John Henry Pelly, Esq., Governor of the Company in London during the Simpson era.

were by the terms of the 1821 agreement to meet annually to decide policy and promotions) diminished in importance. At first, Simpson took considerable pains in the management of the Northern Department Council, moving between conciliation and firmness as the occasion demanded, but never letting control slip from his hands. 'You can gain neither honor nor glory by quarrelling wt them but can twist them round your finger by setting about it properly', he remarked on one occasion. Councils were not yet the truncated formalities they became in later years, when Simpson normally wintered in England, and arrived at what John McLean castigated as 'sham' councils each summer to present decisions already made in London, sometimes (if McLean is to be believed) even arranging for the minutes to be written in advance. If this stage was still in the future, yet Simpson in the 1820s mastered his councils of senior officers so effectively that no serious challenge ever came from them. 'They could outvote me, but it has never been so', as he told the Select Committee of 1857; or, as Donald Ross observed, 'they grumble and growl out of doors, but in the Council room are as mute as Lambs'. This is not to say that Simpson ruled untrammelled. He was always subject to the final authority of the London Committee, which included directors of the ability and experience of John Henry Pelly (Governor from 1822 to 1852), Andrew Colvile (Committee member from 1808 to 1839, then Deputy Governor, and finally Governor), and Edward Ellice (Committee member from 1824 to 1837). When necessary the Committee did not hesitate to differ from Simpson, but the relationship between them remained one of mutual respect, and disagreements were rare.

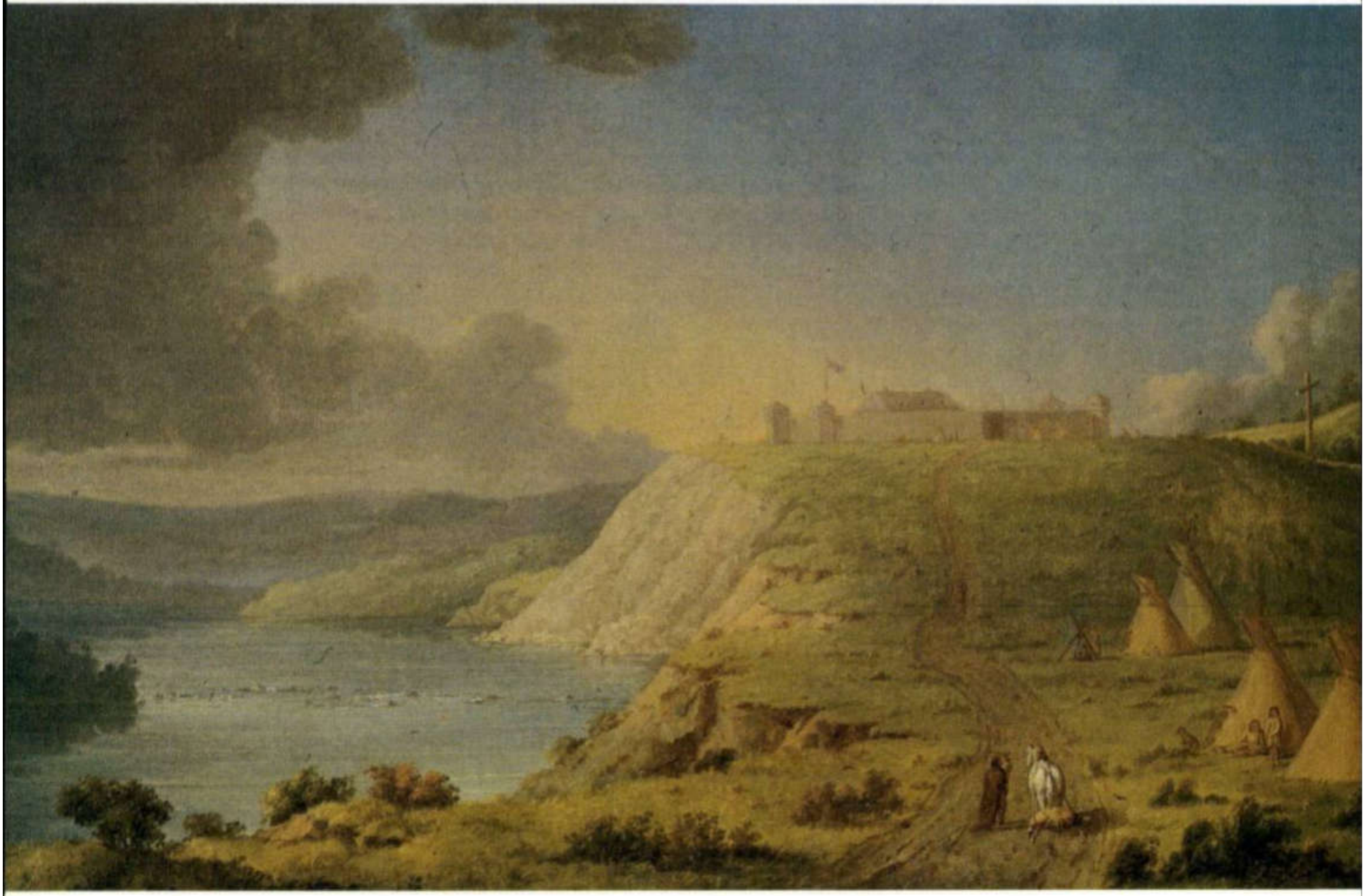
This is perhaps more than can be said for the relations between Simpson and his officers. The Governor's secret 'Character Book' of 1832, though written at a time of considerable personal strain, highlights some of the more intractable problems which still faced Simpson more than a decade after coalition. The senior management of the Company in North America was a legacy of that amalgamation. All twenty-five of the Chief Factors of 1832 had been in the service in 1821, eighteen of them as North Westers. They were not Simpson's men, at least not in origin, and most owed their status to prowess displayed in the rough days of conflict in the fur trade. Among the Chief Traders the balance was more even: fourteen former North Westers as against ten Hudson's Bay men (and a single new entrant to the trade since 1821). Many of the qualities valuable in the days of furious competition had become redundant, even embarrassing, in the more sophisticated trading world of the 1830s. In other cases senior officers saw their rank and emoluments as just reward for past exertions. They 'think that their business only is to legislate and direct and are not satisfied unless they have a posse of Clerks Guides Interpreters & supernumeraries at their disposal while they look on with a pair of Gloves on their hands', grumbled Simpson. But, as the Committee reminded him in 1834, 'the Company have no power to dispense with the Services of any Commissioned Officer, however old, infirm, imbecile or troublesome he may be.' The new Deed Poll of that year took some steps to change the situation by offering fresh inducements to Chief Factors to retire, and by increasing the number of Chief Traders; but since the number of Chief Factors was reduced, promotion to the highest rank became even harder for talented and ambitious younger men. The Company faced its increasingly complex commitments in North America with an ageing group of senior officers, and the blockage formed across the path to promotion had become a serious problem by the 1830s. It is no coincidence that some of the bitterest attacks on Simpson from within the Company—from John McLean, John Tod, George Barnston—had their origins in resentment at denial of promotion.

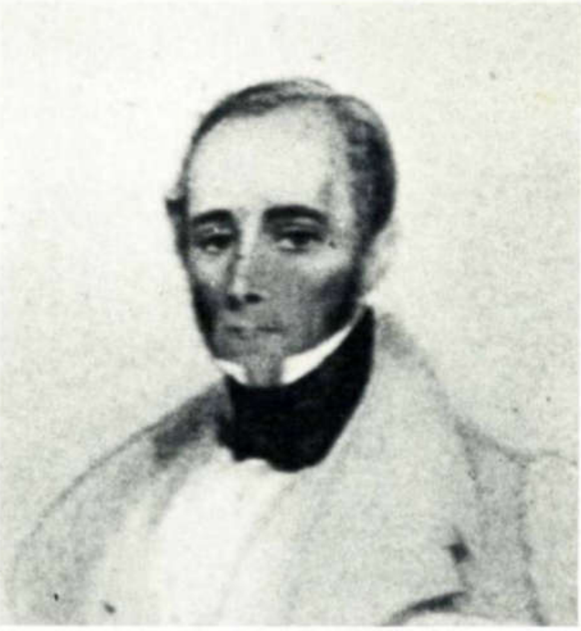
The distinction between 'officers' and 'men', between 'gentlemen' and 'servants' was now a sharp one; and was accompanied by a further stratification among the servants, between tradesmen—who received special allowances, and often separate living quarters—and labourers. Unlike in the earlier period, it was almost impossible to rise from the ranks to commissioned status. Only entry as an apprentice clerk would put a young man on the first rung of the promotion ladder, and such posts depended largely on the support of the London Committee. As its Secretary wrote, 'Clerkships are granted almost invariably as favours to those to whom the Governor and



Fort Timiskaming, c. 1870. From a water-colour by Andrew Lockhart.

Fort Edmonton. From a water-colour by Paul Kane, 1847.





Courtesy of Elaine Mitchell.

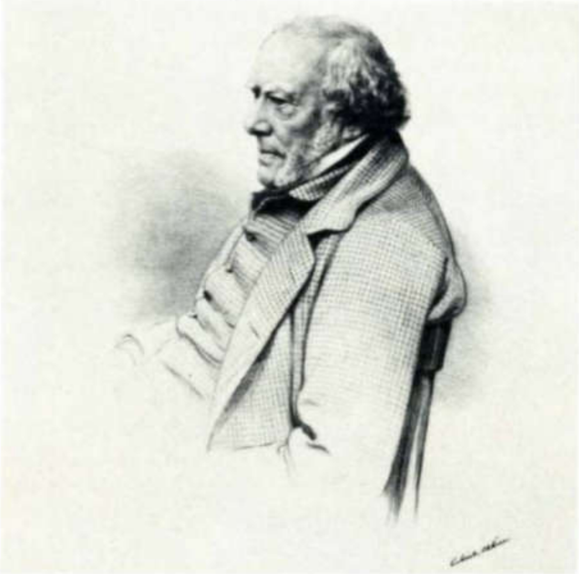
Angus Cameron of Fort Timiskaming.

Archives of British Columbia.

Chief Factor John Rowand of Fort Edmonton.

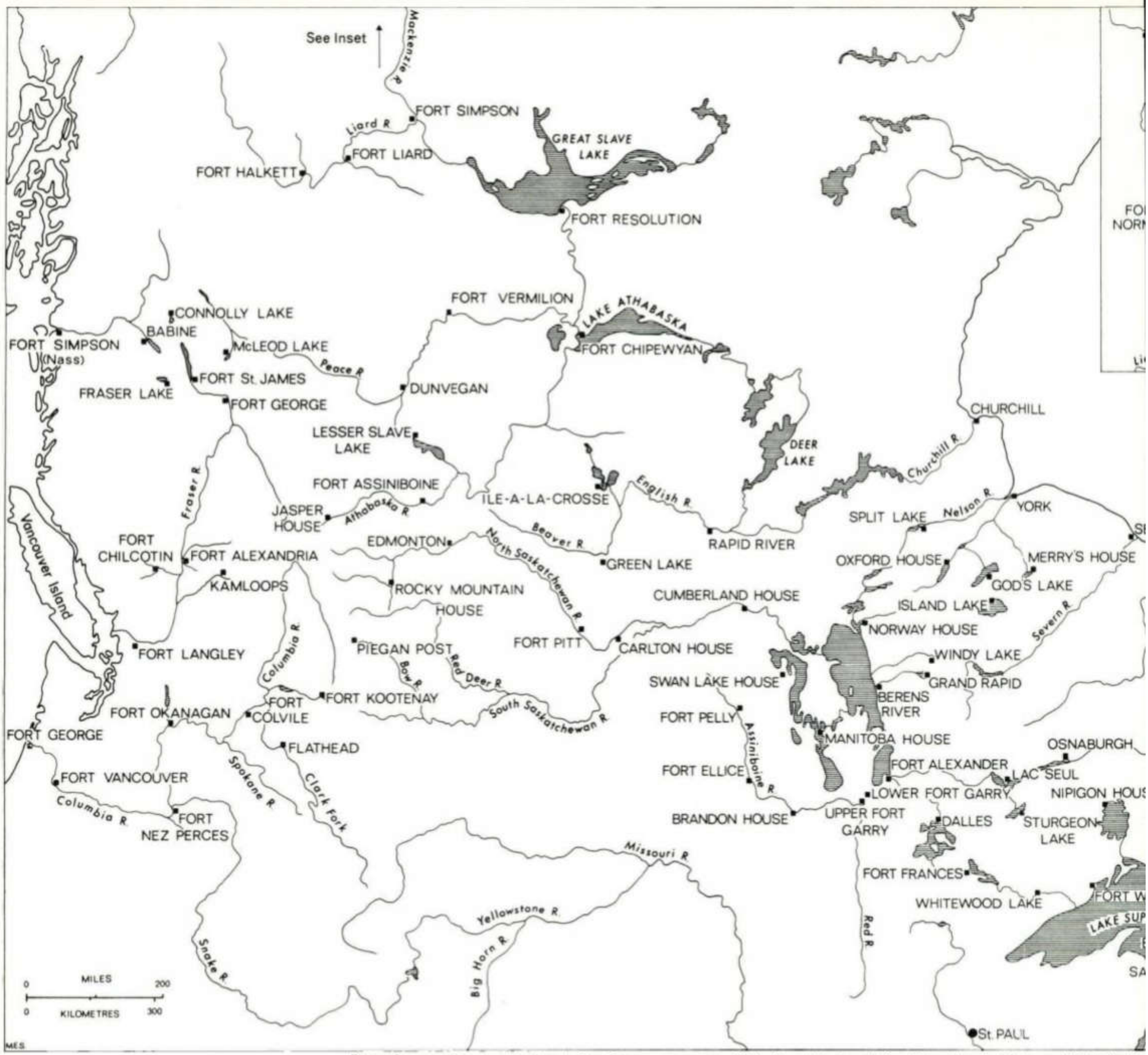
Committee give them.' The new hierarchical rigidity bore particularly hard on the mixed-bloods. There was little problem in finding employment as a labourer or interpreter; it was the better-educated youth, often from Red River, trying to enter the Company's service as apprentice clerks, who found difficulties. A new rank, postmaster, was created, and many of those appointed were, in Simpson's words, 'the half breed Sons or Relatives of Gentlemen in the Country who could not obtain admission to the service as Apprentice Clerks. . . . they have no prospect of further advancement.

Edward Ellice, member of the London Committee, 1824-1837.



This bar was well understood, if not always well received, by Simpson's officers. In 1840 Chief Factor James Sutherland thought it futile to enter his son into the Company's service, for 'half-breeds as they are called has no chance there nor are they respected whatever their abilities may be, by a parcel of upstart Scotchmen'. Charles McKenzie was equally outspoken a year or two later: 'It appears the present Concern has stamped the *Cain mark* upon all born in this country; neither education nor abilities serve them.' Discrimination was never total, and by the middle years of the century native-born sons were achieving high rank in the Company's service. By the 1860s they made up one-third of the officers in the Northern Department. Edward Ellice ruminated on the change with some sourness in his evidence to the Select Committee in 1857 on the appointment of apprentice clerks: 'I took great care in former times to send out the best men we could find, principally from the North of Scotland, sons of country gentlemen, clergymen, and of farmers . . . I think that lately it has been too much the habit to endeavour to supply the places of men who have retired by persons connected with the country, sons of the half breeds.'

Among the Company's general labour force, an attempt was made to keep a balance between Canadians and Orkneymen. Their very different qualities of enterprise and steadiness, thought Simpson early on, made it 'good policy to have about an equal proportion of each, which will keep up a spirit of competition and enable us to deal with them on such terms as may be considered necessary and proper.' The mix was easier to contemplate than to achieve. Canadians preferred alternative employ-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Mackenzie R
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GREAT SLAVE LAKE
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FORT HALKETT
FORT RESOLUTION
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NORI
FORT VERMILION
LAKE ATHABASKA
CONNOLLY LAKE
BABINE
FORT SIMPSON (Nass)
McLEOD LAKE
FORT CHIPEWYAN
Peace R
FORT St. JAMES
FRASER LAKE
DUNVEGAN
FORT GEORGE
CHURCHILL
LESSER SLAVE LAKE
DEER LAKE
Churchill R
Fraser R
FORT ASSINIBOINE
English R
ILE-A-LA-CROSSE
Nelson R
YORK
JASPER HOUSE
Athabaska R
SPLIT LAKE
Vancouver Island
Beaver R
RAPID RIVER
FORT CHILCOTIN
FORT ALEXANDRIA
EDMONTON
North Saskatchewan R
GREEN LAKE
OXFORD HOUSE
MERRY'S HOUSE
KAMLOOPS
ROCKY MOUNTAIN HOUSE
GOD'S LAKE
CUMBERLAND HOUSE
ISLAND LAKE
Severn R
NORWAY HOUSE
Columbia R
FORT PITT
CARLTON HOUSE
FORT LANGLEY
PIEGAN POST
WINDY LAKE
Bow R
Red Deer R
SWAN LAKE HOUSE
GRAND RAPID
FORT KOOTENAY
BERENS RIVER
FORT OKANAGAN
FORT COLVILE
South Saskatchewan R
FORT PELLY
FORT GEORGE
MANITOBA HOUSE
OSNABURGH
FLATHEAD
Assiniboine R
FORT ALEXANDER
FORT ELLICE
LAC SEUL
FORT VANCOUVER
Spokane R
LOWER FORT GARRY
NIPIGON HOUS
Columbia R
FORT NEZ PERCES
Clark Fork
BRANDON HOUSE
UPPER FORT GARRY
DALLES
STURGEON LAKE
Missouri R
FORT FRANCES
FORT W
WHITEWOOD LAKE
Yellowstone R
LAKE SUP
Red R
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MILES
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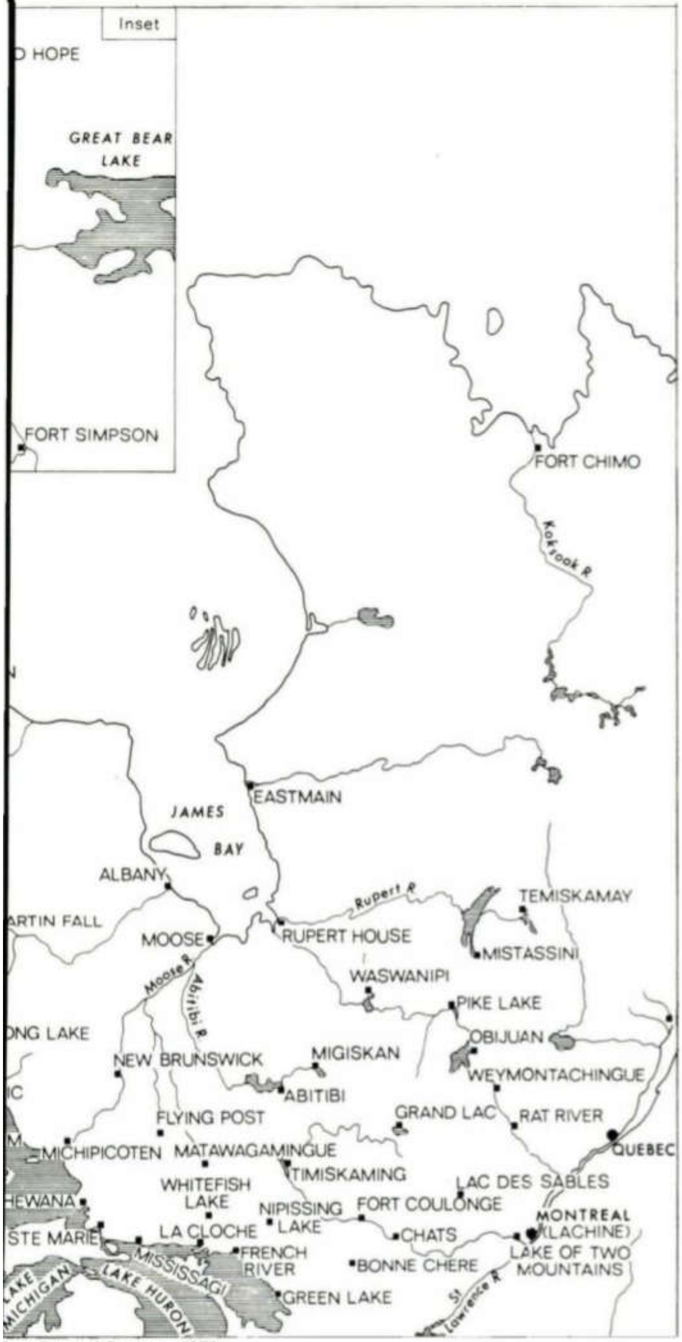
MES
St. PAUL

Part of a map showing Hudson's Bay Company posts c.1832. From 'Hudson's Bay Miscellany', Volume XXX, Hudso

ment in lumbering, canal and (later) railway construction, so that by 1841 Simpson was complaining that 'Voyaging seems to be getting into disuse or out of fashion among the French Canadians.' Those willing to join the Company did not always measure up to the traditional image of the Canadian in the fur trade—in 1843 Angus Cameron at Timiskaming complained that his latest Canadian recruits were 'weak punny helpless Dwarfs'. Orkneymen, too, became more difficult to attract across the Atlantic as agricultural prospects improved at home. Mixed-bloods and Indians formed an increasing proportion of the Company's labour force, many of them employed on a seasonal basis, so that in the words of one trader the Company was forced to have 'recourse to mixt bands of many nations'.

However flawed, in Simpson's estimation, the tools at his disposal, the collective achievement of the overseas Governor and his officers in the 1830s and 1840s was impressive. This was, J. S. Galbraith has written, 'the halcyon era of the Great Monopoly'. Competition was held at bay in the vulnerable border areas from the Pacific coast to the Ottawa River. Where necessary, the Company was prepared to trap a region bare for, as Simpson put it, 'an exhausted country I conceive to be the best protection we can have from opposition'. Using this approach, the Company had repulsed American traders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HOPE
GREAT BEAR LAKE
FORT SIMPSON
FORT CHIMO
Koksoak R
EASTMAIN
JAMES BAY
ALBANY
RTIN FALL
MOOSE
Moose R
Abitibi R
Rupert R
RUPERT HOUSE
TEMISKAMAY
MISTASSINI
WASWANIPI
PIKE LAKE
NG LAKE
OBIJUAN
NEW BRUNSWICK
MIGISKAN
WEYMONTACHINGUE
ABITIBI
IC
FLYING POST
GRAND LAC
RAT RIVER
QUEBEC
MICHIPICOTEN
MATAWAGAMINGUE
TIMISKAMING
WHITEFISH LAKE
LAC DES SABLES
HEWANA
NIPISSING LAKE
FORT COULONGE
MONTREAL (LACHINE)
STE MARIE
LA CLOCHE
CHATS
MISSISSAGI
FRENCH RIVER
BONNE CHERE
LAKE OF TWO MOUNTAINS
LAKE MICHIGAN
LAKE HURON
GREEN LAKE
St Lawrence R

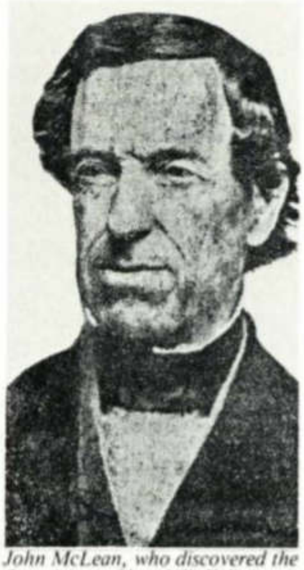
ay Record Society, 1975.

in the Snake country. On the northwest coast the combination of Company vessels and posts had proved too much for the American maritime traders, and the agreement with the Russian American Company in 1839 eased arrangements with the Russians on the coast. At the busy depot of Fort Edmonton Chief Factor John Rowand controlled the trade, and the supplies and the Indians of the Saskatchewan District, while on the plains to the southeast an understanding with the American Fur Company in 1833 held good for ten years. This helped the Hudson's Bay Company to close one of the most worrying gaps in its defences, for not only did the waterways between the Upper Missouri and Lake Superior provide possible routes for rival traders to move into Rupert's Land, but the settlement at Red River posed difficult and delicate problems of commercial control to the Company. Farther east still, petty traders from Canada were an irritant, particularly those pushing along the Ottawa and St Maurice rivers towards the watershed and into Rupert's Land. Since some of these were lumberers or farmers first, and fur traders second, the customary methods of overcoming opposition were not always effective. Their operations, Simpson complained, were 'alike destructive to the aboriginal population and the fur-bearing animals'. In this region the Company's response was flexible: some competitors were undersold, others bought out; elsewhere Company servants engaged in unfamiliar lumbering operations to discourage encroachments by timber firms. As the pressures from the westward-moving frontier of lumbering and settlement increased, so the Company slowly fell back towards its traditional trapping districts in eastern Rupert's Land. Until mid-century at least, the holding operation was generally successful.

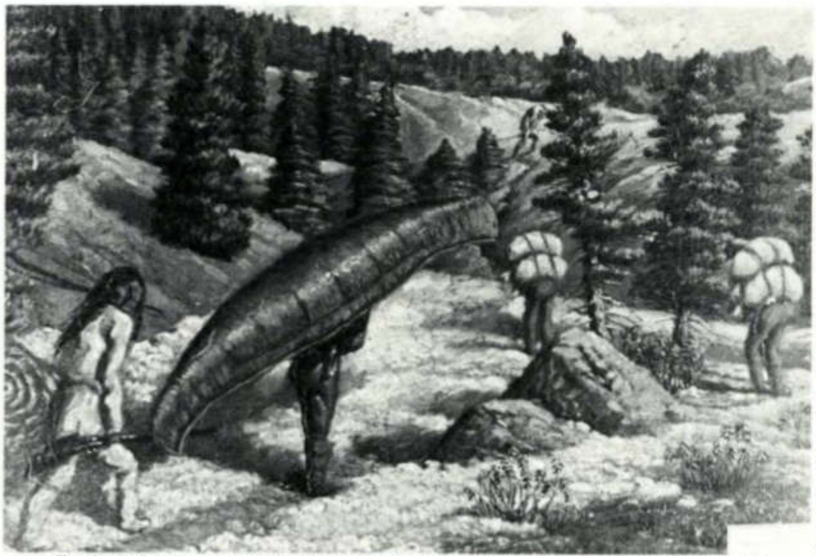
With its border strategy working well for the most part, the Company was able in the secure heartland of its operations to pursue a systematic policy of exploitation and expansion. In those regions in danger of total exhaustion, trapping was carefully regulated to ensure survival of the trade and a continued livelihood for the Indians. Efforts were made to discourage the killing of cub beaver, and to prohibit the use of steel traps. At Charlton Island a beaver nursery was established. Posts were closed for a period of years to give a district time to recover, and Indians were directed towards muskrat rather than beaver and marten. With the ending of competition between posts after 1821, Indians lost much of their freedom of choice. A policy of rigid conservation involved unfamiliar restrictions on Indians and traders alike. There are examples in the Company records of Indians killing beaver for food, and then hiding the skins to conceal this breach of regulations; of others, resentful and uncomprehending at being allocated a smaller catch than Indians in the next district. Some traders were more responsible than others in observing the new rules. In 1841 Donald Ross at Norway House wrote to James Hargrave at York Factory:

> I am glad to learn that you and I agree on the subject of preserving the Beaver, depend upon it, if we both live in charge of our respective quarters for some four or five years to come, the low country will be rich in Beaver, and were it not for Oxford House, it would have been so before now—the three successive *commanders* of that *Garrison,* are three of the most desperate *Beaver Killers* in all America—

Some of the older fur-bearing areas were by now in steep decline. Under the quota system introduced into the Northern Department in 1826, York and Churchill were



John McLean, who discovered the Grand (now Churchill) Falls in 1839, on his Labrador journeys.



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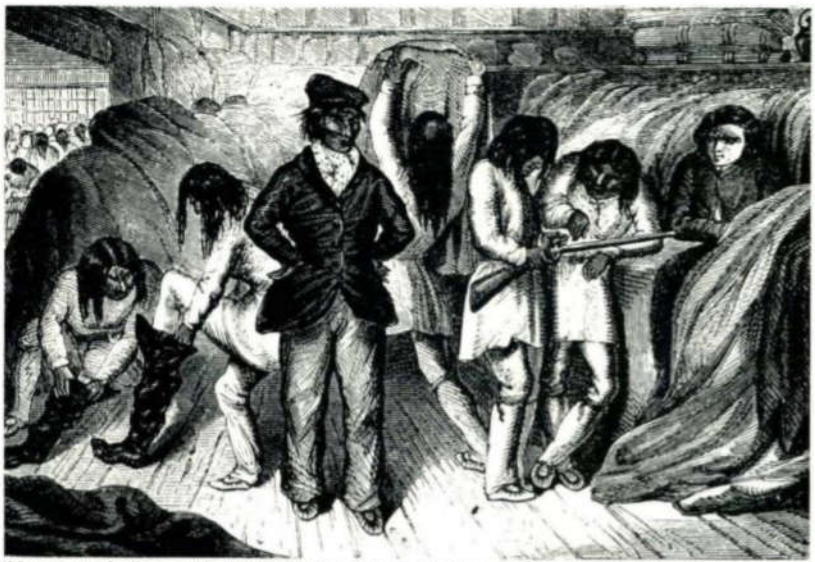
On the Labrador Peninsula, 1861. Portage on the Moisie River. From a drawing by William Hind, taken on the expedition to Labrador.

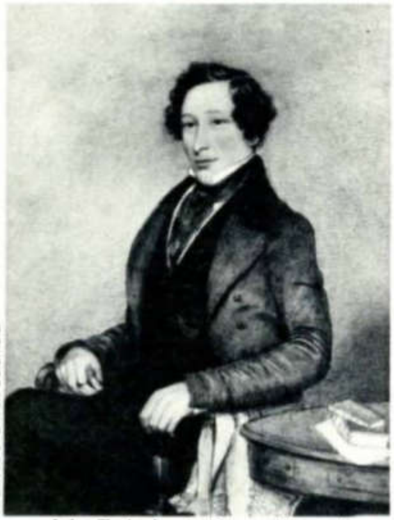
at first held to an allocation of 300 beaver, compared with 5,500 for the Saskatchewan and 5,000 for Athabasca. The importance of York Factory was more as an administrative and transportation centre. Using Norway House as its inland depot, it sent supplies through to the brigades for the Northwest—Athabasca, Mackenzie and Peace rivers. In those regions a more expansionist policy was followed as the Company sought new fur areas and navigable rivers.

This quest took Company explorers across terrain rugged even by the hard standards of the fur trade. Samuel Black, John McLeod and Robert Campbell unravelled a skein of waterways in the far Northwest. Chief Factor Edward Smith explained the motives behind these ventures when he wrote in 1831 of one of McLeod's journeys: 'This voyage may open to the Company a Second Caledonia—there is not a doubt in my opinion but that the Country to the West of the Mountains is rich in Fur bearing animals . . . . a Water communication to get at them when found may yet render McKenzie River the finest plume in our Capes'. Major discoveries were made by men whose names are now forgotten, or at best dimly remembered. John Bell explored the Peel and Rat (now Bell) rivers, and in a discovery with important commerical implications followed the Porcupine River southwest to its juncture with the lower Yukon River. There Fort Yukon was established in 1847 in an area which was formally Russian territory, but was unexploited and unoccupied by Russian traders from the coast. Trade with the western Eskimos was opened up at the Company's most northerly post of Fort McPherson on the Peel River, and at Fort Anderson to the east. With its martens in particular much in demand on the London market, Mackenzie River became one of the most lucrative of the Company's fur-trade districts—'one of the finest fields we have for extension of trade', in Simpson's words—and by the 1850s its profits averaged almost £25,000 a year.

Not all these ventures paid their way, as the attempts to develop the trade of the Labrador Peninsula showed. James Clouston, William Hendry and John McLean criss-crossed the forbidding region in attempts to exploit its rumoured beaver resources, and possibly the Eskimo trade of Hudson Strait. The Ungava enterprise fitted Simpson's general policy as expounded by him when he took over the Southern Department in 1826—'while we turn our attention seriously to the important object of nursing the older Country we must endeavour to keep up our quantity of returns by hunting fresh Districts'—but it met with little success. From the new post of Fort Chimo at Ungava Bay Chief Trader Nicol Finlayson castigated the Naskapi Indians of the interior as 'a suspicious, deceitful and thievish set' who were blind to the advantages of trapping fur-bearing animals as long as they could hunt caribou for food. 'Their only talk is about Deer and deerhunting', he wrote in irritation. Few Company traders showed much awareness of the relationship between the yearly movements of the Naskapi and the implacable environment in which they struggled to keep alive. The Indians' reluctance to make an abrupt change in their way of life to conform to European trading requirements was strengthened by the unreliability of the Company's supply arrangements—'being told at one time that a ship would arrive with the necessary supplies—which did not arrive; at another time that men would arrive and a trading post be established in the interior—which proved equally fallacious; they began even at that early period to consider us a parcel of fools come hither to deceive them.' As early as 1835 Simpson was concerned that seven years of effort had



'Nasquapee Indians at the Hudson's Bay Company post at Mingan.' From 'Explorations in the Interior of the Labrador Peninsula' by Henry Youle Hind, published 1863.



Archives of British Columbia

John Tod who, in Simpson's words 'experienced much privation in New Caledonia'. Undated water-colour.

resulted in only 'one miserable and solitary establishment, the trade of which does not yet cover the interest of money laid out'; but so committed was he to the region, one of the few he had never visited, that Chimo was not abandoned until 1843, and then the decision was taken during Simpson's absence on his world tour.

The very extent of the Company's territories brought serious problems. Mackenzie River was especially awkward to supply at the end of its tortuous route from York Factory. There were long delays between requisition and supply, goods arrived in poor condition, and pilfering was common. The 'inhuman labour' of the lengthy Portage la Loche across the Methy height of land was notorious for more than one reason. A trader complained that

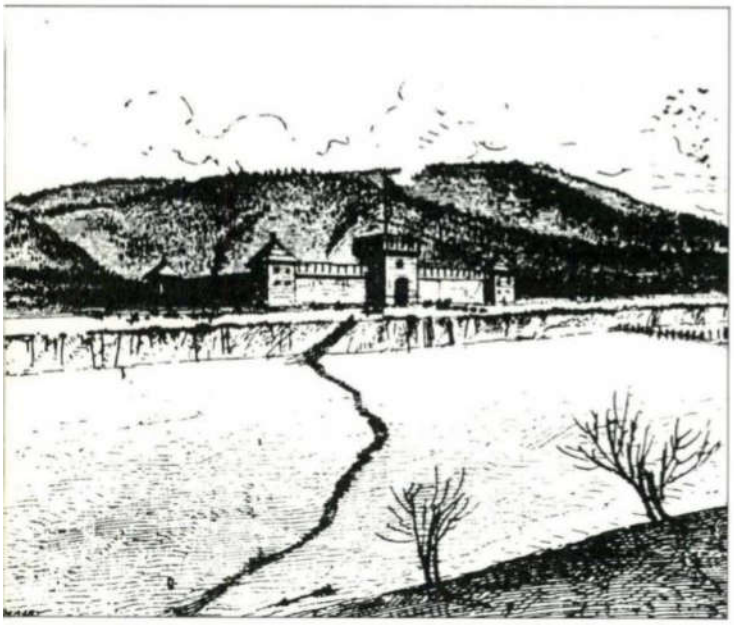
> 'the portage La Loche Boys' are a sett of rough & terrible fellows caring Little for the contents of packages. All their aim is to get through the voyage as quick as possible their cry is the *D—l take the hindermost* helter, skelter, bing, bang, the pieces here & there on the portage, pieces containing the most brittle ware are as tenderly dashed on the rocks as two or three pieces of bar iron fasted together.

In the remote areas of Mackenzie River, New Caledonia and Ungava the frustrations of centralized control exercised by a distant authority were felt in their most acute form, and were illustrated by the perennial disputes between Simpson and his officers over the question of imported provisions. With transport to these areas costly and slow, posts might yield a working profit if their garrisons could live off the country, but if European provisions were needed in any quantity the transport costs might well wipe out any trading profits. Simpson's appreciation of this, and his suspicion that indolence rather than necessity explained the demand for European provisions, accounted for his insistence that garrisons should live off the land.

Archives of British Columbia

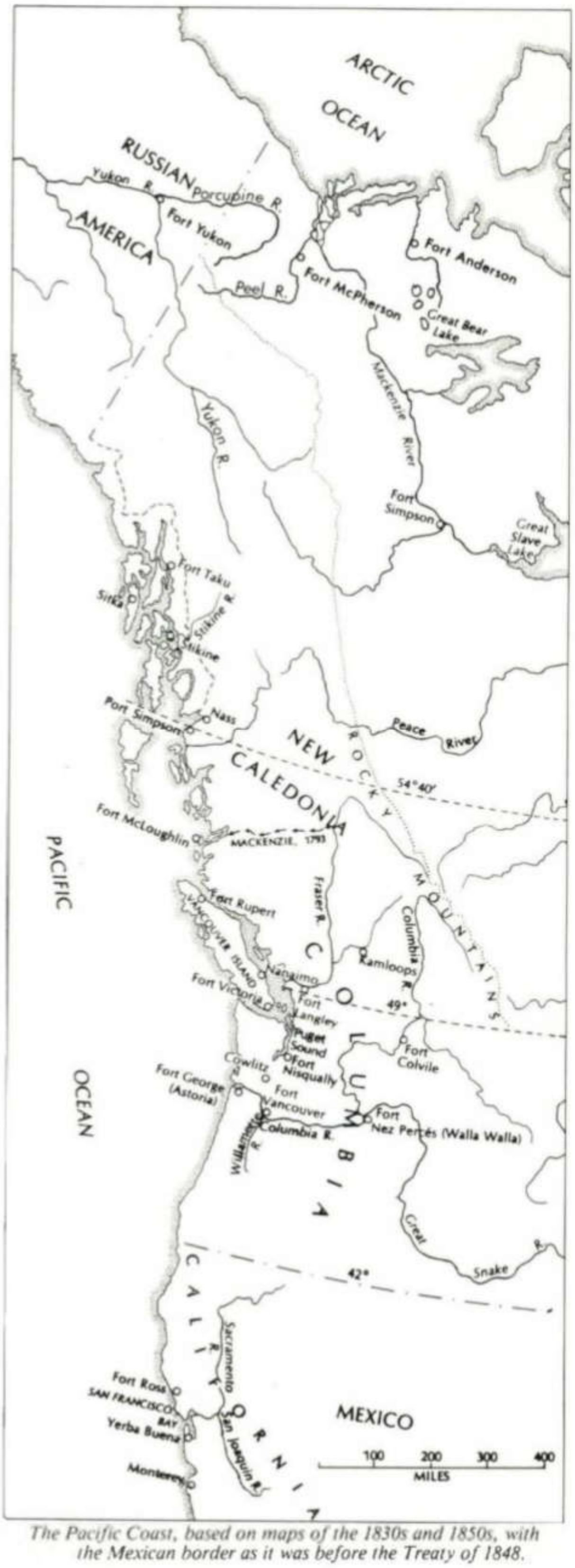
McLeod Lake post in 1879. G.M. Dawson with a survey party noted the sign above the door 'B.C. Fort Misery'.

New Caledonia was regarded within the service with dread, not because of the rigours of its climate, but because of the difficulty in finding adequate local food supplies, as the memoirs of John Tod show. Tod was sent to New Caledonia in 1824 since, as Simpson put it, he 'has got indolent . . . requires to be brushed up and made acquainted with the hardships of the country . . . has been too long in the low countries'. (Tod himself saw his banishment as the direct result of a heated quarrel with Simpson.) At his post of McLeod Lake, Tod noted that 'Dried salmon and an annual allowance of 50 pounds of

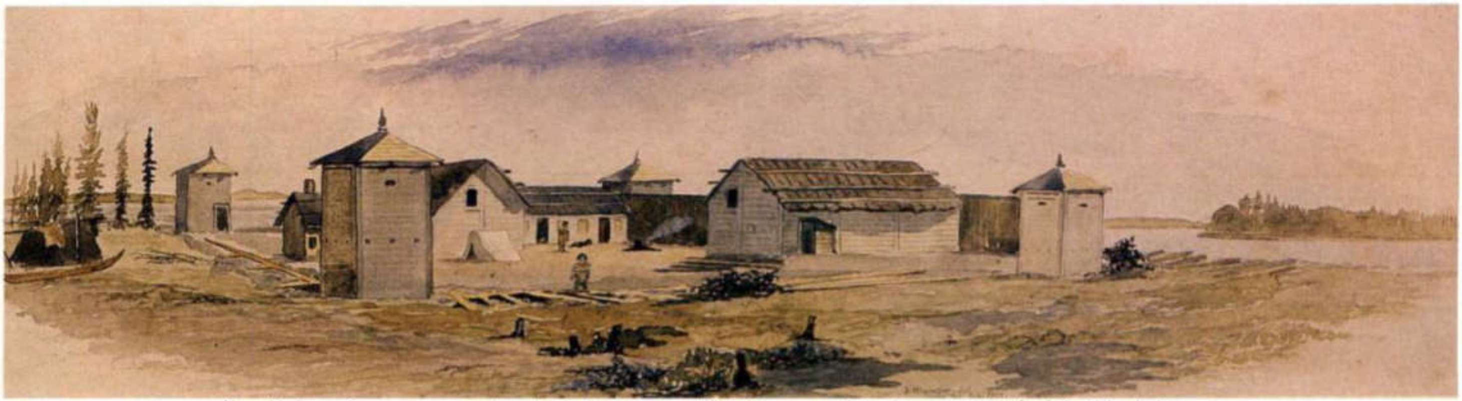


Fort Anderson, a sketch by Emile Petitot, from 'Les Grands Esquimaux'.

flour for each man was the only food provided by the company. Any farther provision had to be sought, locally with gun, fish hooks or native nets, but we had no salt.' During Tod's long sojourn at McLeod Lake there was an ironic moment in 1828 when Simpson arrived en route to the Columbia, to find on offer only dried berries and 'a remnant of dog'. Conditions improved later, when sugar and tea were added to the rations, and cattle were kept at some of the district's more southerly posts. Even so, as McLean wrote, although the fare at some of the posts was 'tolerable', at others it was 'scarcely fit for dogs'. In regions such as this, the officers argued, it was essential to have imported provisions on hand as a supplement and a reserve. The issue was again a contentious one in Labrador, where successive Company officers battled with Simpson over supplies. At Nichicun during the winter of 1837-8 the garrison was near starvation because of the lack of caribou, while at Chimo the officer in charge reported 'none of the people having any more idea of fishing than if they had been brought up on the summits of the Alps.' In the winter of 1840-1 the fishery there failed anyway, and most of the men were scattered in open camps over the country in a state of 'unmitigated hardship'.


ARCTIC
OCEAN
RUSSIAN
AMERICA
Yukon R.
Porcupine R.
Fort Yukon
Peel R.
Fort McPherson
Fort Anderson
Great Bear Lake
Mackenzie River
Yukon R.
Fort Simpson
Great Slave Lake
Fort Taku
Sitka
Stikine R.
Stikine
Fort Simpson
Nass
Peace River
NEW CALEDONIA
ROCKY MOUNTAINS
54°40'
Fort McLoughlin
MACKENZIE, 1793
PACIFIC
OCEAN
Fort Rupert
Fraser R.
VANCOUVER ISLAND
Nanaimo
Kamloops
Columbia R.
COLUMBIA
Fort Victoria
Fort Langley
49°
Puget Sound
Fort Nisqually
Fort Colvile
Cowlitz
Fort George (Astoria)
Fort Vancouver
Columbia R.
Fort Nez Percés (Walla Walla)
Willamette R.
Great
Snake R.
42°
CALIFORNIA
Sacramento R.
Fort Ross
SAN FRANCISCO BAY
Yerba Buena
San Joaquin R.
Monterey
MEXICO
100
200
300
400
MILES

The Pacific Coast, based on maps of the 1830s and 1850s, with the Mexican border as it was before the Treaty of 1848.



Fort Yukon, from a water-colour by F. Whymper, 1867. Two years later it was established that the fort was located in Alaska and the Company was obliged to cease trading there.

The private letters of the officers of the period show their resentment at a system of 'Fine and Censure' imposed by a governor who viewed a single cheese sent inland as 'Contraband', and who in 1844 ordered 'Table Appointments' to be reduced by fifty per cent and 'to be of the cheapest, vizt. Tin Plates: E ware Cups & Saucers: no table cloths, which with Towels are considered private property.' Donald Ross had a point when he noted that so petty were some of the regulations that they prompted traders 'to say that more attention is paid to these miserable trifles than to matters of far greater moment to the concern'. Dissatisfaction at the distant posts was the more acute because they were at once more vulnerable to interference with their indents and, in most cases, more important to the trade than the established southerly posts. As Chief Factor John Lee Lewes put it from the headquarters of the Mackenzie River District at Fort Simpson in 1840—'to the south our trade is on the wane, retrograding before Priests and I *wot* not *wot*, bidding fair at no very distant period to a total exterpation, the North is now our only strong hold'. Two years later he was still arguing for more generous food supplies, 'for from it arises more than 9/10 of the anxiety we all have to suffer from it in this hardest of hard Districts. Provisions, Provisions . . . .'

This period brought, in E. E. Rich's words, 'such prosperity as the Company had never yet known'. Both stockholders and commissioned officers shared in this prosperity. From 1825 to 1863 the dividend never dropped below 10 per cent; on occasion it reached 15 per cent, and it was usually supplemented by a bonus. Although the allocation of profits to the commissioned officers fluctuated more widely, a Chief Factor's share averaged £720 a year, and a Chief Trader's £360. These were handsome sums indeed by mid-nineteenth-century standards, and help to explain the strenuous competition for the limited number of commissions. Respect for the Company's overall performance however, should not be allowed to obscure the hardships of life in its service. As Letitia Hargrave wrote from the comparative comfort of York Factory in 1843, 'The truth of the matter is that it is a hideous country for men to live in & that it is yearly getting worse.' Captain J. H. Lefroy wondered at the lonely existence of the traders at the smaller posts—'men whose lives have been spent in the woods, who have married Indians or half breeds, who never read, because they can get no books, have but a mail once a year.' Richard Grant at Oxford House noted that 'The only advantage I have here over what a prisoner has in the civilized World is that besides being the prisoner I am also the Gaoler'. John Tod claimed that during his nine years at McLeod Lake he lost facility in his own tongue. John Bell wrote from Fort Good Hope, Mackenzie River, 'I am as usually the case with me in this miserable and distant part of the country, a bankrupt for news of any kind. Where My friend shall I glean any? from Indians, animals or Fowls of the air . . . . the World might have been at an end (this part excepted) without my hearing of it!'

Not all posts were small and impossibly remote. John McLoughlin at Fort Vancouver, Archibald McDonald at Fort Colvile, John Rowand at Fort Edmonton, held sway over establishments often bustling with business. They received travellers and brigades, organized supplies and transportation, and for the most part lived well. Even at the outlying posts not all servants found isolation oppressive. At Fort Anderson, almost as far north as a trader could go, Roderick MacFarlane happily spent his spare time collecting specimens of birds, eggs and mammals for the Smithsonian Institution. There are problems in relying on the memoirs and reminiscences of the disaffected, but when all allowances are made, there remains an authentic ring to Tod's recollection, set down near the end of his life, of 'the strain of the company's service at the numerous outer stations—the effects of isolation—constant closeness of death by murder or starvation—the monotonous food, and the hardships of necessary travel'.

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VIII. THE PACIFIC COAST

AT THE TIME OF COALITION the Hudson's Bay Company had only the most tenuous presence west of the Rocky Mountains, whereas the North West Company had brought to the union an extensive, if difficult, trade in the Columbia and New Caledonia Districts. The trade was based on a network of posts stretching as far south as Fort George (Astoria) on the south bank of the Columbia River, and included such strategically important inland locations as Nez Perces (Columbia River), Okanagan (Spokane River) and McLeod Lake (Upper Peace River). In its attempts to exploit this immense area in the years before coalition the North West Company had been beset by problems of communications, markets, and Indian relations. The new company inherited all of these, and in addition found itself enmeshed in sensitive diplomatic issues. To the north a Russian declaration of 1821 sought to deny all access by non-Russians to the coast north of latitude 51°N., while equally ominous was the failure of the convention between Britain and the United States which accepted the 49th parallel as the frontier across the prairies to go beyond a ten-year truce west of the mountains. Since six of its seven newly acquired posts in the Columbia District were south of the 49th parallel, the Company was clearly vulnerable in face of the expected boundary negotiations of the next few years. With the trade running at a loss, there was talk within the Company of abandoning the District altogether, although as the London Committee reminded Simpson in 1822, it at least protected 'the more valuable districts to the North of it', that is New Caledonia.

For three years after coalition Simpson's preoccupation with matters east of the Rockies left him little time for this tangle of problems, but in 1824 he decided to visit the Columbia District, and prompted the appointment there of Chief Factor John McLoughlin. The relationship between Simpson and McLoughlin was a critical one for the Hudson's Bay Company west of the mountains, and its deterioration over the years into a bitter personal feud was to bring serious weaknesses to the Company's position. McLoughlin had served the North West Company since 1803, and had emerged in its last years as one of the most impressive of the wintering partners. At the coalition he was appointed Chief Factor and given charge of the Lac la Pluie District. Physically 'the Doctor' (as he was called by his colleagues in deference to his early medical training) was an imposing figure: a stern giant of a man with a mane of white hair, given on occasion to frightening outbursts of temper, 'such a figure as I should not like to meet on a dark Night', Simpson once wrote. From the beginning the two men had their differences but for some years they worked in reasonably harmonious partnership, which perhaps had as its bond of union their common devotion to the Columbia District. Despite frequent threats to return east across the mountains, McLoughlin left it for only one furlough in the next twenty-one years.

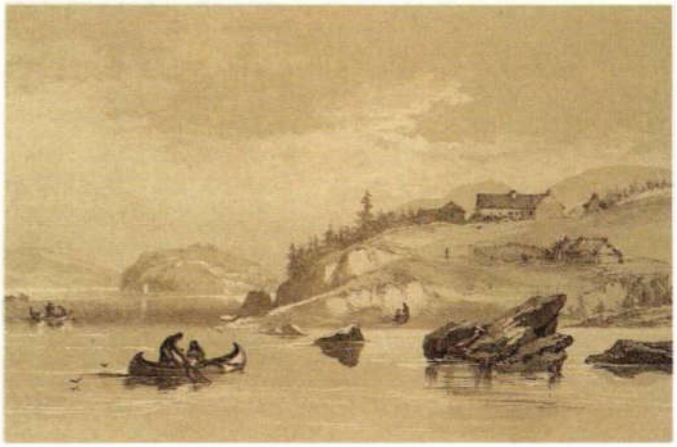
More surprising, for long the Columbia District exerted a fascination over Simpson: 'I can scarcely account for the extraordinary interest I have taken in its affairs, the subject engrosses my attention almost to the exclusion of every other', he wrote on his first visit. Least impressionable of men, even Simpson was awed by his crossing of the Rockies:

> the Mountains rise perpendicular to a prodigious height; the scenery Wild & Majestic beyond description; the track is in many places nearly impassable and it appears extraordinary how any human being should have stumbled on a pass through such a formidable barrier as we are now scaling and which nature seems to have placed here for the purpose of interditing all communication between the East and West sides of the Continent.

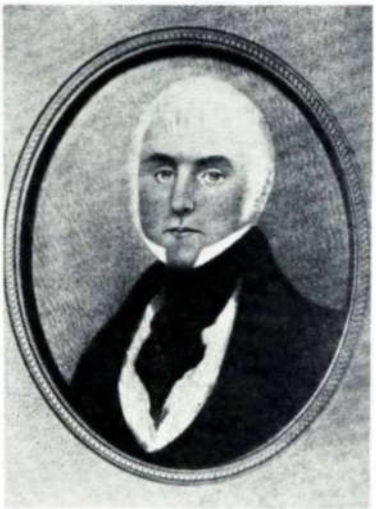
Once at the coast, men hardened by conditions in the old fur-trade country of Rupert's Land found themselves in very different surroundings. Duncan Finlayson, as he reached the Columbia, noted that

> the eye can fix on no one object, which is not directly the reverse, of what it has been accustomed to, on the east side of the Mountains—the Trees, Birds, Insects,

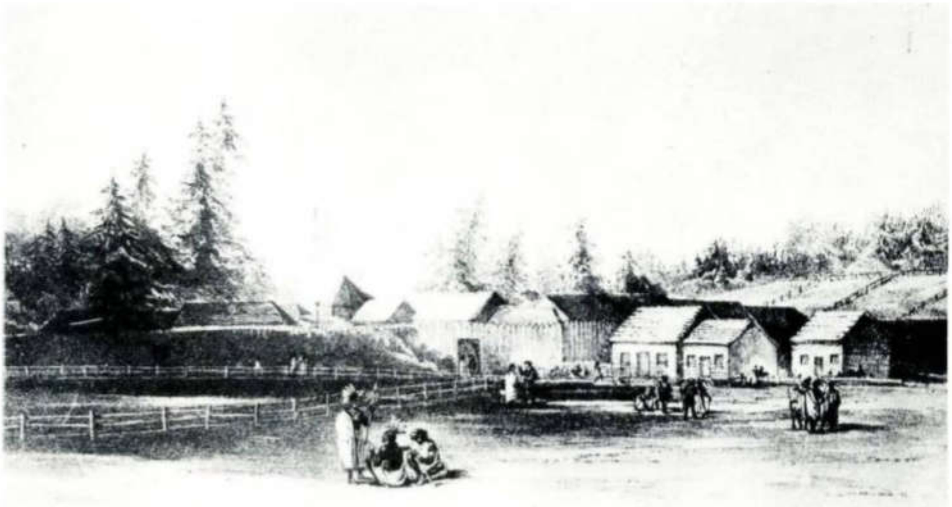
Fort George, formerly Astoria, 1845. Lithograph from a sketch by Henry J. Warre.



McLoughlin House. Oregon City



Chief Factor John McLoughlin. From a miniature painted on ivory c. 1838.



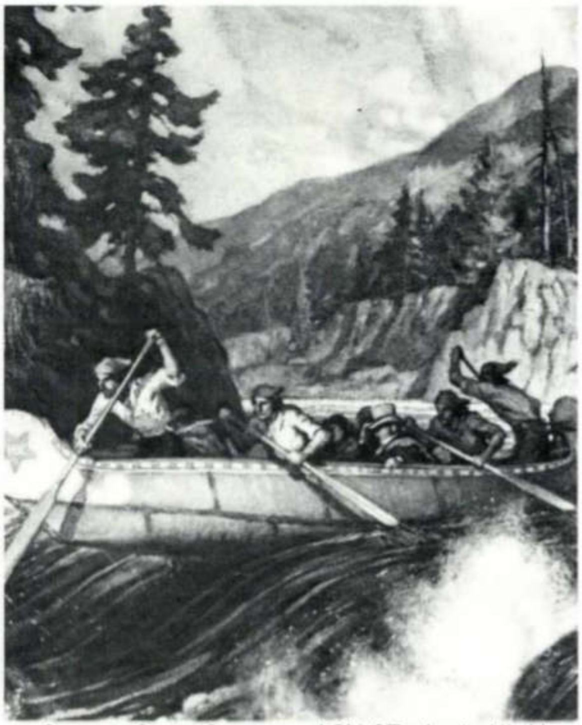
Fort Vancouver, 1845, from a drawing by H. J. Warre.

> & herbage wear a foreign aspect.—The atmosphere in winter, is not so humid as I was led to expect, & is much cooler in summer by refreshing breeses from the ocean.

However unfamiliar the physical environment, however alien the Indians of the northwest coast appeared to men used to the lifestyle of the plains and eastern woodlands tribes, some of the basic problems of fur-trade management remained the same. As he reflected on the Chinooks of the Columbia, Simpson was echoing the sentiments of earlier generations of fur traders: 'keen traders and through their hands nearly the whole of our Furs pass, indeed so tenacious are they of this Monopoly that their jealousy would carry them the length of pillaging or even murdering strangers who come to the Establishment if we did not protect them.'

Although unimpressed by the state in which he found the Columbia District in 1824—'shamefully mismanaged and a scene of the most wasteful extravagance and the most unfortunate dissention'—Simpson was captivated by its potentialities, and moved swiftly to put affairs on a more business-like footing. Anticipating a boundary settlement which would exclude the Company from the area south of the Columbia, he ordered that Fort George should be replaced by a post on the north bank of the river. This new depot for the Columbia trade, Fort Vancouver, was about seventy-five miles from the river mouth, and set in fertile agricultural country. This latter consideration was important to Simpson, who was pursuing with even more fervour than usual his policy of replacing expensive imported provisions with local produce. Of the Company servants on the Columbia he grumbled, 'They may be said to have been eating Gold', and in a firm statement of policy insisted, 'It has been said that Farming is no branch of the Fur Trade but I consider that every pursuit tending to leighten the Expence of the Trade is a branch thereof'. Further new posts were established at Fort Langley, near the mouth of the Fraser River; and at Fort Colvile, near the Kettle Falls on the Columbia, which was to become the supply depot for the inland posts. The area south of the Columbia was regarded as a temporary sphere of Company influence and, as the London Committee put it to Simpson, was to be trapped bare. This commercial equivalent of a scorched-earth policy was entrusted to that hardiest of former North Westers, Peter Skene Ogden, who was to keep the American trappers at bay in the Snake country at the same time as the vessel Simpson proposed should be stationed on the coast hindered the activities of the American maritime traders. Farther north, another boisterous figure from the days of company rivalry, Samuel Black, was given the task of discovering a better route for supplying New Caledonia than the Columbia or overland trails, and of investigating the extent of Russian penetration inland. The Company's international position was secured, for the time being, by an agreement with Russia in 1825 which fixed the boundary at 54°40'N., but allowed the British to trade in Russian coastal waters and also to navigate the rivers flowing from the Company's inland areas of New Caledonia to the coast; and by a renewal in 1827 of the truce with the United States over the boundary west of the mountains.

The policies defined, McLoughlin was left to supervise them. In New Caledonia, Black's 'Rocky Mountain Expedition' of only seven men took him in 1824 from the Peace River along the Finlay to 58°40'N., an exploit dismissed by Simpson as being without significance because Black had found no clear way through to the Pacific, although there was worrying evidence of contact between the Indians of the upper Stikine River and Russian traders on the coast. Away to the south, Ogden's



Governor George Simpson and Chief Trader Archibald McDonald descending the Fraser in 1828. From a painting by A. Sherriff Scott R.C.A., for the Hudson's Bay Company.

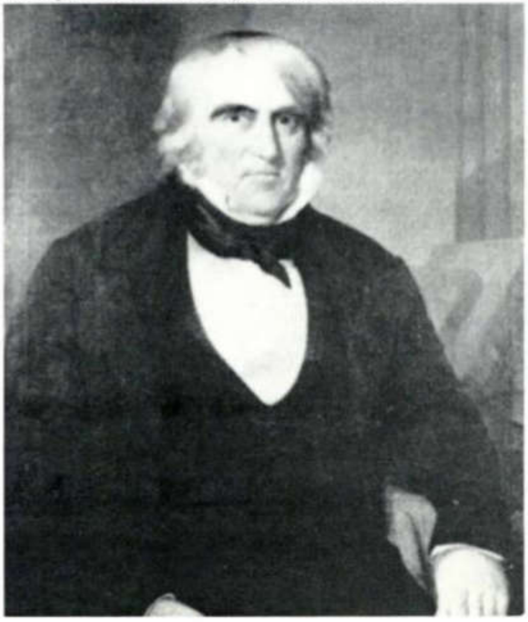
combative temperament was given full rein in the Snake country, defined by Ogden in expansive terms as 'bounded on the North by the Columbia Waters On the South by the Missourie, On the West by the Spanish Territo[ries] and the East by the Saskatchewan Tribes'. It was a region of natural hazards, unpredictable Indians, and turbulent American rivals. Ogden's task had been stated by Simpson in bleak, unambiguous terms: 'If properly managed no question exists that it would yield handsome profits as we have convincing proof that the country is a rich preserve of Beaver and which for politicial reasons we should endeavour to destroy as fast as possible.' Between 1824 and 1830 Ogden did this, and more, so that McLoughlin wrote enthusiastically from Fort Vancouver that the Snake country ventures were making 100 per cent profits. They were profits made at a cost, for even by fur-trade standards the hardships of the Snake country were exceptional. Men and horses fell sick and died, they were killed by Indian arrows, froze in winter, and suffered from heat and fever in summer. In June 1827 as his party made its way across a region where liquid mud was their only drink, Ogden wrote, 'this is certainly a most horrid life in a word I may say without exageration Man in this Country is deprived of every comfort that can tend to make existance desirable'. In these years Ogden traversed vast areas of modern Oregon, Utah, Idaho and Nevada; discovered the Humboldt River and sighted Great Salt Lake; and probably reached the lower Colorado. He had trapped furs and carried out exploration to an extent rarely combined before, leading bands of freemen once described by Simpson as 'the very scum of the country and generally outcasts from the Service for misconduct are the most unruly and troublesome gang to deal with in this or perhaps any other part of the World'.

In 1828 Simpson returned to the Columbia, this time by way of the Thompson and Fraser rivers, a journey whose last stages through the Fraser Canyon brought hair-raising dangers which forced Simpson to concede that 'Fraser River, can no longer be thought of as a practicable communication with the interior'. He now accepted that New Caledonia should be supplied from the Columbia by boat and horse. This was a complicated operation, but quicker and cheaper than the alternative route across the mountains from York Factory, 'the most tedious, harrassing and expensive transport in the Indian country' according to Simpson. John Tod has left a graphic description of the Columbia brigades:

> The long journeying of this noble cavalcade of 400 or 500 horses, with their numerous attendants, drafted from various stations, took place annually at a stated time . . . I was always ready to join forces with my large contingent when the cavalcade reached Kamloops. Each officer, however, retained control of his own horses. A 'brigade' as applied in this organization consisted of 16 horses in charge of two men. The load for each horse was two 'pieces' of 84 pounds each, and the horse was supposed to convey this about twenty miles a day . . . .

On the affairs of the Columbia in general, Simpson was much impressed by the benefits brought by the

Peter Skene Ogden. From a portrait by John Mix Stanley in the Archives of British Columbia.

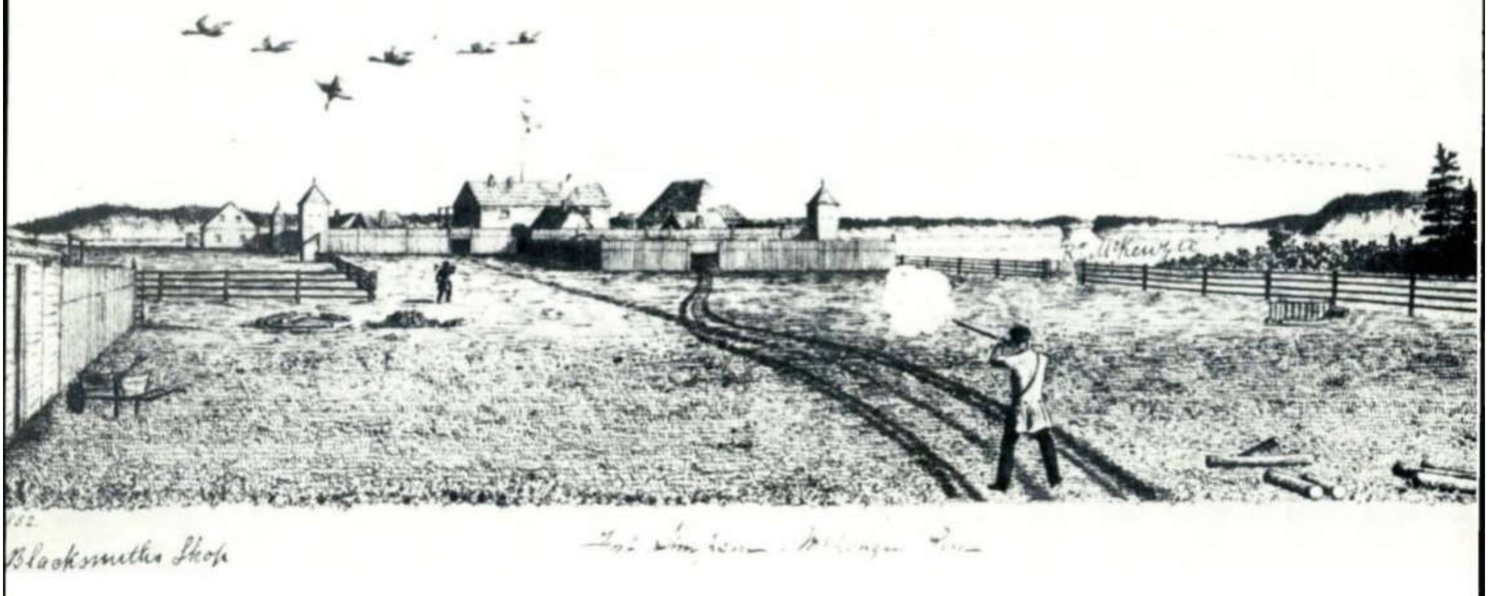


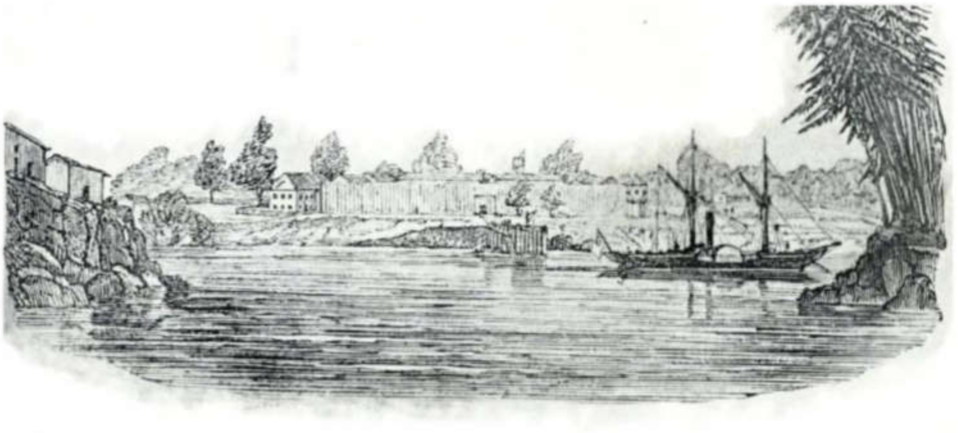
'change of system' and 'change of management'. But already there were signs of storms ahead. Although the Columbia District officially belonged to the Northern Department, its distance from York Factory, Simpson and the annual councils, gave McLoughlin a unique freedom of manoeuvre. He was in full agreement with the Company's determination to establish a chain of posts from the Columbia north to Alaska, and in 1831 Ogden, released at last from the cares and tribulations of the Snake country, sailed north to build a post near the mouth of the Nass River, 'the grand mart of the Coast both for Sea Otters and Land Skins'. AEmilius Simpson's report of 1828 had shown that the importance of the coast trade to the north lay not in the fabled sea-otter skins of the days of Cook, Vancouver and the Boston traders, for these now formed only a small part of the trade, but in the skins brought down from the interior of northern New Caledonia. The new post, Fort Simpson, was intended to combat the Russians, well established at Sitka and elsewhere, and the Americans, energetically trading offshore. Having established the post, Ogden used his schooners to engage the Americans at their own game, but his attempt to set up another post at Stikine in 1834 was thwarted by the Russians and the coastal Indians, the latter fearful of losing their profitable position between the inland Indians and the offshore traders. They had taken full advantage of the competitive situation offered by the presence of British, American and Russian traders on the coast, 'chuckling at their high price', as the Fort Simpson journal recorded, or, as John Work wrote in 1835, 'It is annoying in the extreme to see the advantage which the black vagabonds endeavour to make of this circumstance.'

Back at Fort Vancouver, McLoughlin found that he had to recognize three price levels—one for the interior, one for the coast, and one for the coastal posts struggling against competitors. Other aspects of Company policy were causing him increasing concern, especially the insistence on using vessels against competitors. The cost of keeping the vessels in repair, the natural dangers of coastal navigation, the possibility of Indian attacks, and the incompetence of the captains, were all matters of nagging unease. The first voyage of the *Cadboro* along the coast in 1827 prompted McLoughlin to complain that 'we acquired very little additional knowledge of the Trade, but we have a shocking proof of its hazardous nature and that a Vessel must be strongly manned to insure the safety of the crew.' The combination of Company posts and ships proved too much for the American maritime traders, who for a time virtually disappeared from the coast, but to McLoughlin the vessels were costly encumbrances—'Four posts when established will be kept up at less expense than one Vessel', he declared. In 1834 he went so far as to send back to England the brig *Nereide* with her captain, only to find that the Committee retaliated by sending out another sailing vessel, and the paddle steamer *Beaver*.

This famous steamer, the first to be seen in the Pacific north of San Francisco, was to become (in Kaye Lamb's words) 'a veritable symbol of the differences of opinion' between McLoughlin and his superiors. Its arrival meant that McLoughlin found himself saddled, to his disgust, with no fewer than seven vessels for the coastal trade and the long haul to China or back to Europe. His opposi-

'Fort Simpson—McKenzies River 1852. Back view near the Blacksmith's Shop.' Pen and ink drawing by Alexander Hunter Murray.





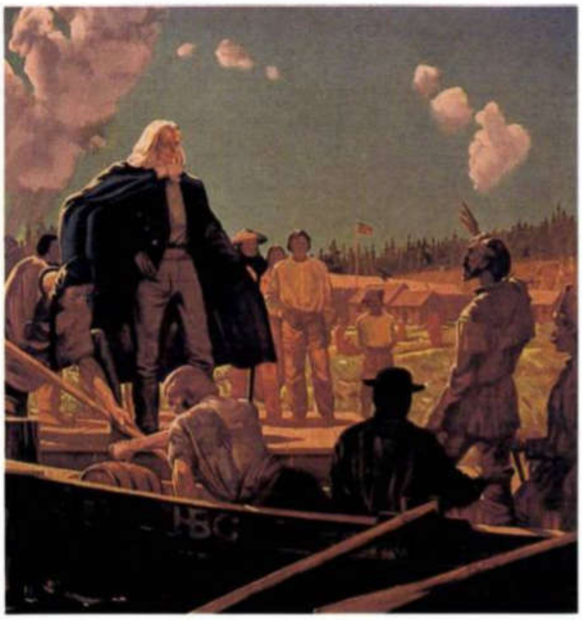
The S. S. 'Beaver' at Fort Victoria, 1846. Artist unknown.

tion to coastal craft stemmed from more than a landman's apprehension about the unpredictable behaviour of ships and their masters. Behind it lay a general reluctance to follow Simpson's uncompromising attitude towards commercial competitors. As long as the Company took the main trade of the region, McLoughlin was unconcerned about the movements of casual traders on the fringes. To insist on trading every last skin on the coast was to McLoughlin a small-minded and needlessly costly policy. There were other irritants as well. In 1832 McLoughlin had drawn up a proposal 'for the rearing of Cattle on a large scale' by himself and other Company servants acting in a private capacity, but when the London Committee decided to introduce the project some years later under its official auspices as the Puget's Sound Agricultural Company, the Chief Factor showed a grumpy reluctance to pursue the matter further. As Simpson had once written, prophetically, of McLoughlin, 'a difference of opinion almost amounts to a declaration of hostilities'.

McLoughlin's furlough in England in 1838-9 appeared to smooth over some of the differences of the previous years, and an agreement in 1839 with the Russian American Company promised a new outlet for his energies in that it conceded to the Hudson's Bay Company a ten-year lease on a coastal strip along the Alaskan mainland to Cape Spencer. On his return to Fort Vancouver McLoughlin drove home the advantage this agreement gave to the Company by sending James Douglas north to take over the Russian post at Stikine and to build another post farther north still at Taku. The coastal Indians who had profited during the years of competition, were to be confronted with a standard, and lower, tariff. The Company had established a virtual monopoly of the trade from California to Alaska, but as he planned to enjoy the new predominance, McLoughlin reckoned without the restless realism of Simpson. In 1841 the Governor, recently knighted, arrived on the Pacific coast during his world tour, and journeyed north as far as Taku to appraise the situation for himself. On his return to Fort Vancouver, Simpson told McLoughlin that the coastal trade was to be put on a different and more economical footing now that competition had disappeared. The coastal posts except Fort Simpson were to be abandoned, and the *Beaver* was to collect most of the furs brought down to the coast. The steamer had obviously made a marked impression on Simpson, who wrote later that not only did she have clear navigational advantages over sailing vessels in 'this labyrinth of waters', but that she exerted 'an almost superstitious influence over the savages . . . she was the terror, whether present or absent, of every tribe on the coast.'

This drastic reorganization was anathema to McLoughlin, who met Simpson's proposals with the spirited response that the Company should keep all its existing posts, and convert the *Beaver* to a sailing vessel! His resentment against Simpson deepened when he was presented with another proposal, that the Company's administrative centre on the coast should move from Fort Vancouver, where Simpson in December 1841 spent seventeen days waiting to cross the bar at the mouth of the Columbia, to Vancouver Island, a shift McLoughlin had long resisted. Largely as a result of his exertions Fort Vancouver was the centre of a thriving agricultural area with farms, livestock, fruit cultivation, a salmon fishery, and a sawmill. Here McLoughlin enjoyed playing host to an increasing number of visitors; and he was disinclined to accept banishment to the dank shores of Vancouver Island, which he had firmly decided was 'not a place suitable to our purpose'. Clearly, McLoughlin's whole position was in jeopardy, for neither Simpson nor the London Committee could accept a semi-independent rule on the Columbia; but the tragic incident of the killing of McLoughlin's son at Stikine, and Simpson's hasty prejudgement of the matter, widened the breach between the two men to irreparable dimensions.

The quarrel between Simpson and McLoughlin was the more deplorable from the Company's viewpoint since it coincided with the emergence in a new and dangerous form of the 'Oregon Question'. One repercussion of the Stikine incident was that it prevented any possibility of agreement between Governor and Chief Factor on the



'McLoughlin Welcomes the Americans, Fort Vancouver, 1834.' This first party included a Methodist minister, the Reverend Jason Lee (standing). Painting by Charles Comfort for the Hudson's Bay Company.

attitude to be adopted towards the long-expected influx of settlers into the Columbia region. Here both geography and demography told against the Company. As the American representative at the inconclusive boundary negotiations of 1826-7 had prophesied: 'Under whatever nominal sovereignty that country may be placed, and whatever its ultimate destinies may be, it is nearly reduced to a certainty that it will be almost exclusively peopled by the surplus population of the United States.' On the American side the passes into the Oregon country were negotiable by wagons; the American fur traders were followed by missionaries and military officers on survey, and by the late 1830s small parties of settlers were reaching Oregon from the east. A half-hearted attempt by the Hudson's Bay Company to redirect 'respectable half breed and other settlers' from Red River to Oregon in an attempt to build a barrier against American encroachments failed; only a score or so of families made the move, and most of them soon crossed the Columbia to settle in the fertile Willamette Valley.

Simpson had long been prepared for a boundary which would fix the frontier along the line of the Columbia; as early as the 1820s he had been in search of an alternative supply route to New Caledonia to replace the existing one by way of the Columbia River and Okanagan. But until a formal decision on the boundary was reached he saw it as his duty to the Company to discourage any infiltration by Americans—whether they were traders, settlers or missionaries. McLoughlin held different views. He argued that eventual American dominance was inevitable, and that it was both politic and good business to supply the outriders of the American migration with provisions, implements and seeds. By 1841 the Americans were arriving in their scores, by 1843 in their hundreds, and thereafter in their thousands. The Company realized that it could no longer hold to its old position, and although James Douglas urged 'a bold advance' on Simpson, against a rising tide of settlement and mounting political pressure from the United States, the Company was helpless. Domestic and international politics were to decide the issue, which soon resolved itself into a question of whether the boundary would be drawn along the Columbia or farther north. The cry of 'Fifty-four forty or fight' figured prominently in the presidential campaign of 1844, but as other outlets of 'Manifest Destiny' in Texas and elsewhere caught American attention, the Oregon Treaty of 1846 between the British and American governments accepted the 49th parallel as the international frontier. In the same year McLoughlin retired to spend the last eleven years of his life on American soil.

James Douglas, who replaced McLoughlin as the Company's senior officer on the coast, referred to the agreement of 1846 (before he had heard its full terms) as 'this monstrous treaty'. Looked at more coolly, the territory left between the international boundaries at 49°N. and 54°40'N. seemed to offer opportunities for a profitable exploitation both of the furs and of the other resources of the region—fishing, farming, lumbering, mining—which Simpson had begun to contemplate during his visit of 1841-2. The fact that the building of the new post, Fort Victoria, started in 1843, made the eventual transition from the Columbia easier. 'The place itself', Douglas wrote of the southern tip of Vancouver Island, 'appears a perfect "Eden", in the midst of the dreary wilderness of the North west coast, and so different is its general aspect from the wooded, rugged regions around, that one might be pardoned for supposing it had dropped from the clouds into its present position.' In 1849 the Company was granted Vancouver Island by the Crown on the understanding that it would support colonization there. On the Company's side this was less a sign of any new-found enthusiasm for settlement as of its determination to control a region which might otherwise harbour rivals with designs on the fur trade of the nearby mainland. Under the new arrangement, Fort Victoria became the Pacific headquarters of the Company, with Douglas in command. Ogden and Work, veterans of the Snake country and much else, comprised with him the Board of Management.

Priority for the Company after the Treaty was to move its supply route for New Caledonia northward from the Columbia River and onto British territory. After some arduous experiments, an all-British route was in use by 1850: from Fort Langley along the lower Fraser, packhorse trail from the new post at Fort Hope to Kamloops, and on to Fort Alexandria before specially-designed boats took the goods to Fort St James. The new route was prodigal of horses, boats and men, but the brigades got down to the coast from Fort Colvile in seventeen days, from Kamloops in only ten. It was, pronounced Douglas, 'a triumph, probably the last of the kind, reserved for the Fur trade'. The valedictory nature of his comment was to be justified sooner than he could have realized, for the difficulty of hiring men as the gold rushes and settlement attracted them elsewhere, the collapse of beaver prices on the London market, and the fall in fur returns, led to a decline in New Caledonia as a fur-trading preserve. The year 1862 saw the last of the celebrated brigades.

The warning signs had long been evident. As early as 1843 Archibald McDonald had written from Fort Colvile that although he had managed to keep up his fur returns, alternatives to the beaver must be found for 'the universal cry is that the old H.B. gold dust is gone for ever.' In 1847 Douglas had foreseen that 'we are threatened with a total dissolution of the whole system and there is no remedy for the disease. We must remodel and construct the system anew'. Into this context fitted the attempts at 'diversification': the sale of supplies to settlers, salmon-fishing off the coast, coal-mining at Fort Rupert and Nanaimo. The Company, so long resistant to settlement and its implications, was being forced to alter course. Douglas, as he presided over the changes, was aware of the irony of his own situation. It was he who in 1838 had told the London Committee (apropos the settlers on the Willamette) that 'the interests of the Colony, and Fur Trade will never harmonize, the former can flourish, only, through the protection of equal laws, the influence of free trade, the accession of respectable inhabitants; in short by establishing a new order of things, while the fur Trade must suffer by each innovation.' When Dr Helmcken reached Fort Victoria in 1850 he immediately noticed that many of the Company officers 'were thoroughly averse to the Company taking or having taken the colonization of the island on their shoulders. They thought it brooded ill for their dividends, for some supposed that the expense would fall on the Fur Trade'.

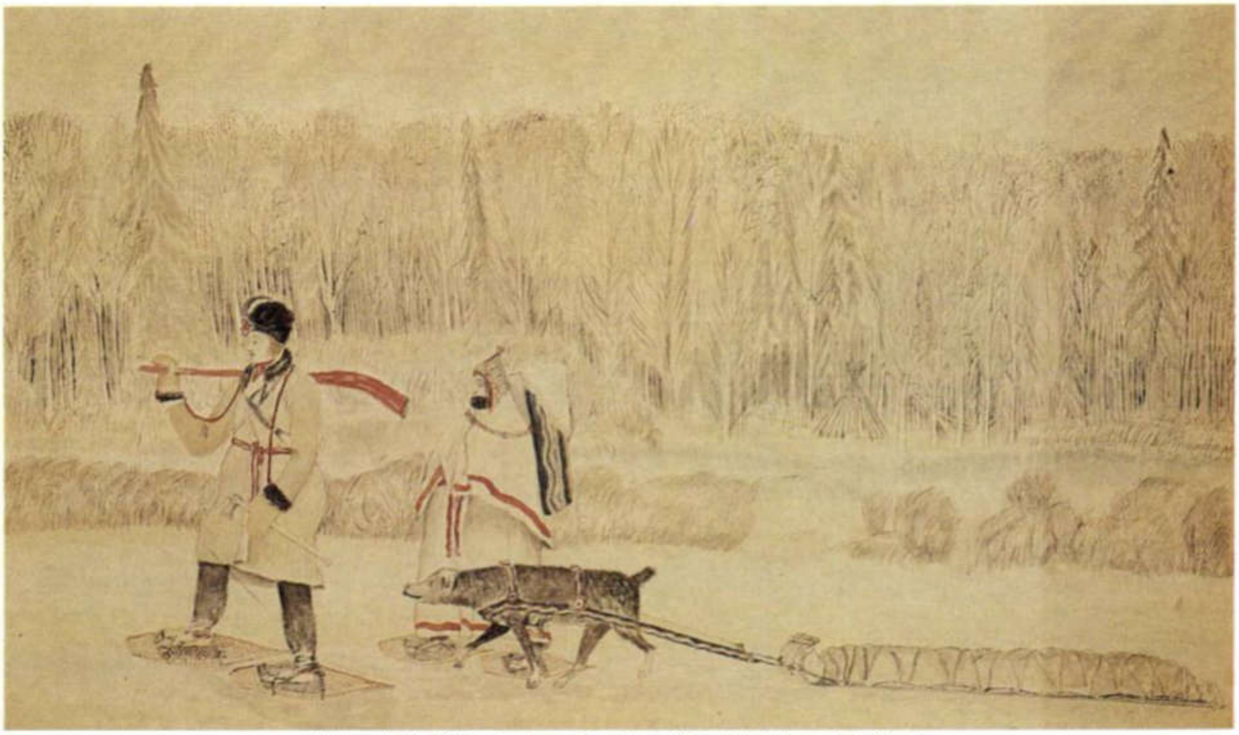
Throughout the 1850s the Company wrestled with a series of unfamiliar problems. While on the mainland the fur trade was in decline, the anticipated potential of Vancouver Island was slow to materialize. The coal miners produced more trouble than saleable cargo while the first, hopeful agricultural settlers thought the island 'little better than a mass of Rock'. Although relatively few in number, their arrival brought a new and worrying dimension to relations with the Indians near Fort Victoria. From the Company's old headquarters at Fort Vancouver, Ogden watched with growing dismay, pointing out to Simpson that 'the Fur Trade and Civilization can never blend together . . . the former invariably gives way to the latter.' He accused the colony of draining the fur trade of resources and funds ('Red River ought to suffice', was one bitter remark), and in 1853, the year before his death he wrote: 'The fact is—I have a most contemptible opinion of Vancouvers Island Colony . . . the Colony *is a sink of money*'.

Veterans of the fur trade such as Ogden were understandably ill at ease in the shifting circumstances. Even Douglas, who in 1851 was appointed Governor of Vancouver Island by the British government, while retaining his Company rank of Chief Factor, seemed an anachronism to some of the new arrivals. His experience in the fur trade, and in dealing with Indians, were regarded as grounds for suspicion rather than approval: as one settler remarked, he 'does not seem up to governing a white population at all'. A brash young clerk of the Company wrote home in 1851, 'the Fur Trade in the West is done', and went on:

Sir James Douglas, Chief Factor, Hudson's Bay Company; Governor of Vancouver Island (1851-63) and of British Columbia (1858-64).

> Mr. Douglas thoroughly understands the fur trade from trading a beaver with the belly cut out to opposing a Yankee trader but the youngest Clerk in your office has the advantage of him in all else. In the higher sense of the word there are no educated men in this country, they one and all left school and came to the country at 15 years of age.

At the same time, some of Douglas's old associates were accusing him of disloyalty to the Company, and of neglecting the fur trade of New Caledonia. There, the discovery of gold at Thompson's River in 1857 brought an influx of miners and settlers, and with it a challenge to law and order, and to British authority. A difficult situation found its logical solution when in 1858 the Company's rights in the whole region were ended, and New Caledonia (under the name of British Columbia) became, like Vancouver Island, a crown colony. That James Douglas, no longer in the service of the Hudson's Bay Company, was appointed Governor of the two colonies was a tribute to his reputation. In another sense it was a reminder of the part which the Company and the fur trade had played in ensuring that this part of the northwest coast remained British rather than becoming American or Russian. ◆

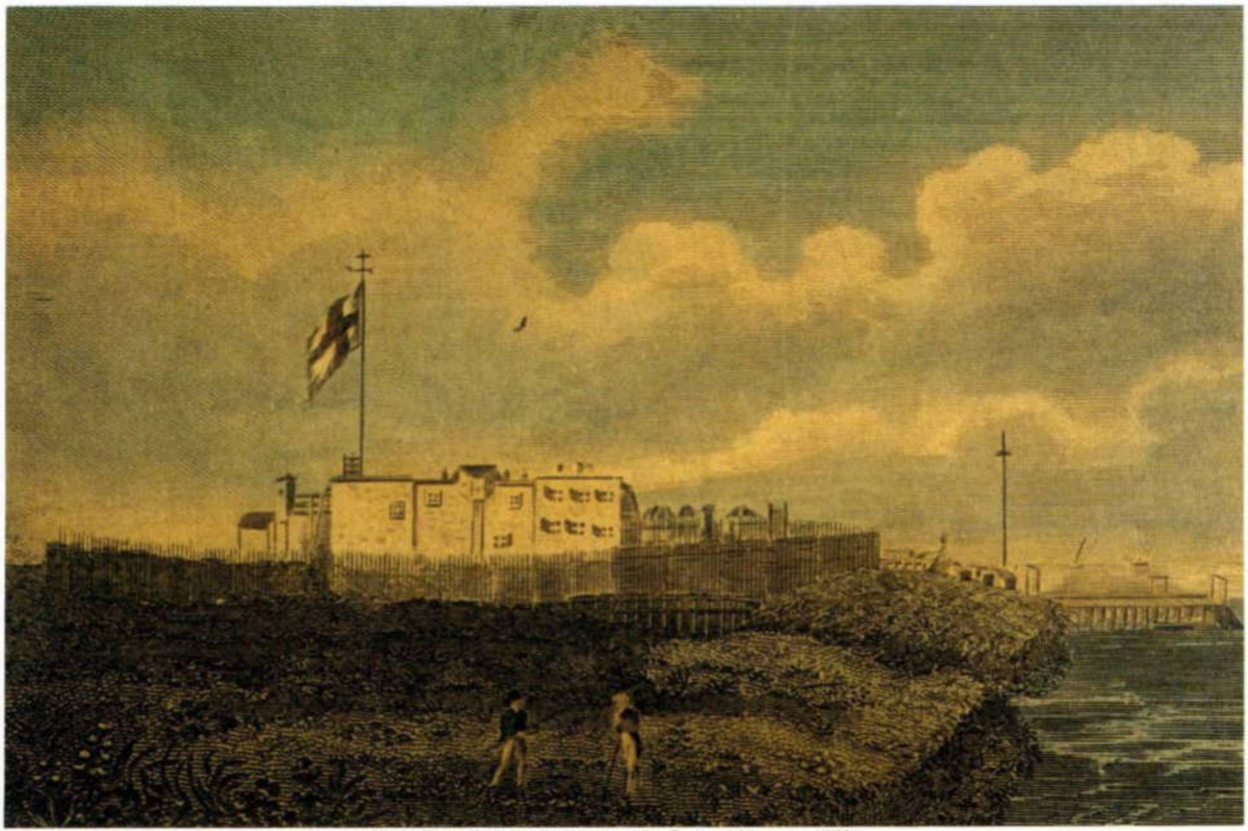


'A man & his Wife returning with a load of Partridges from their Tent'.
Water-colour drawing by William Richards. Early nineteenth century.

IX. FAMILY AND COMMUNITY IN THE FUR TRADE

THE EXPANSION of the Hudson's Bay Company from a handful of Bayside factories to the post-union network of posts covering half the continent was accompanied by social as well as economic changes. The earlier period was dominated by the Company's refusal to allow its servants to take their wives to the Bay, and by its equally firm if paradoxical insistence that they should have no contact there with Indian women. The first part of this policy was easy to enforce; the second, impossible. As we have seen, from the 1730s onwards, glimpses of Indian women peep through the usually discreet factory records. Richard Norton, Joseph Adams, James Isham, Humphrey Marten, Ferdinand Jacobs, Robert Pilgrim, Andrew Graham, are all known to have had one or more Indian 'wives', and children by them. In this static phase of the Company's history, with its garrisons tied to the Bayside, the women came mostly from the bands of Cree Home Indians who had gathered near the posts. Sexual favours and connubial comforts were repaid by access to the factories and their resources for the wider families of the women, on the argument (as it was put at Albany) that since 'ye Englishmen . . . Keeped there Women, they had a Right to there Victuals.'

In reality, the relationship was more complex than this equation indicates, for in the mutual dependence of fur traders and Indians the women played an important practical role. The taking by a factor of an Indian wife often ensured that her band might be relied upon to supply the factory with furs and game. Joseph Adams had a Cree woman of 'ye blood Royal', while Humphrey Marten's Indian wife was categorized, significantly, as the daughter of the 'Captain of the Goose Hunters'. From the days of Kelsey's inland ventures onwards, Indian women had helped the Company as interpreters, guides and negotiators. At a more mundane level, the Indian women at the factories were indispensable for their dexterity in making moccasins and snowshoes, dressing furs, and snaring small game. Later, as the Company men followed the Canadians onto the inland routes, other skills emerged as the women helped with the making of birchbark canoes, preserving food, collecting berries, harvesting rice, making pemmican and maple sugar. At the new inland posts an Indian wife was useful for diplomatic as well as practical reasons according to Philip



York Fort. Coloured engraving by Samuel Hearne, 1770s.

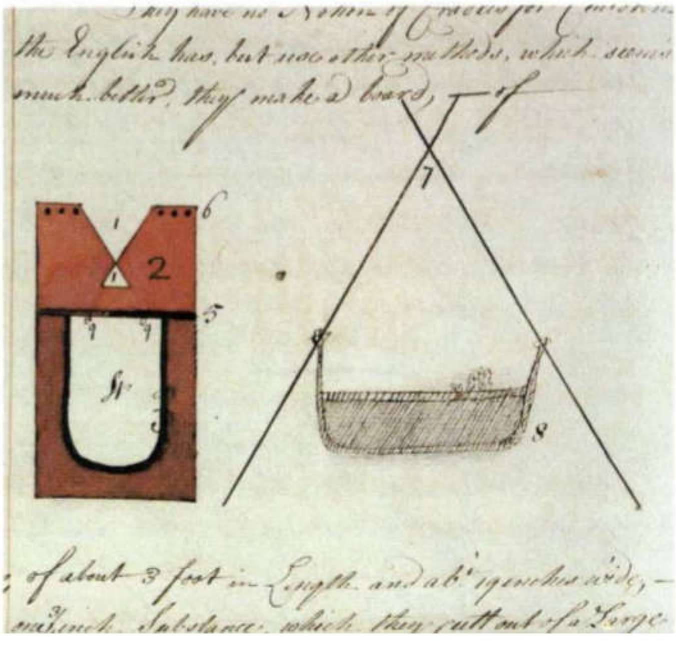
Turnor in 1780: 'the Masters of most of your Honors Inland settlements . . . would Labour under many difficulties was they not to keep a Woman as above half the Indians that came to the House would offer the master their Wife the refusal of which would give great offense.'

Slowly, realization that Indian women were economic assets in the fur trade dawned on the London Committee long after it had been taken for granted by the Company's French and Canadian rivals. As late as 1802 the Committee grumbled to the York Factory council about the cost of clothing the Indian wives and children of the servants, and received a very sharp reply:

> We wish to remark that the women are deserving of some encouragement and indulgence from your Honors, they clean and put into a state of preservation all Beavr. and Otter skins brought by the Indians undried and in bad Condition. They prepare Line for Snow shoes and knit them also without which your Honors servants could not give efficient opposition to the Canadian traders they make Leather shoes for the men who are obliged to travel about in search of Indians and furs and are usefull in a variety of other instances, in short they are Virtually your Honors Servants and as such we hope you will Consider them.

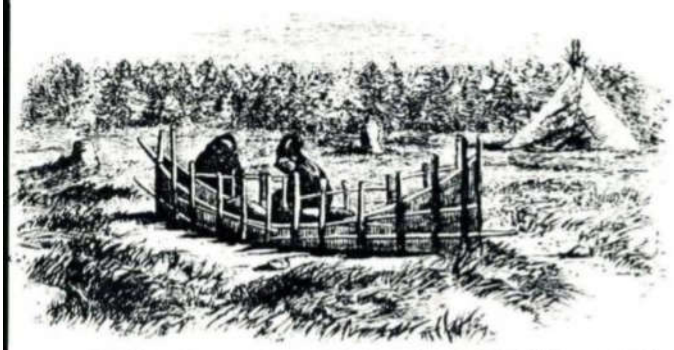
For many years, moral scruples, ignorance, and distrust of possible complications had held back the Company from any official recognition of the facts of the Bay situation. An unfortunate episode in 1750 when Robert Pilgrim returned to England with his Cree wife and their infant son, only to die shortly after, leaving the Committee to sort out the tangle, led to a prohibition of further movements of this kind. The order was contested by several Company factors, who viewed their progeny as more than the products of casual liaisons. It was true that when a Company officer retired, his Indian partner

Indian cradle and back board. Drawing from Isham's 'Observations on Hudson's Bay', 1743.



the English has, but noe other methods, which seems much better, they make a board, of

of about 3 foot in Length and ab.t 19 inches wide, — one $\frac{3}{4}$ inch Substance, which they cutt out of a Large

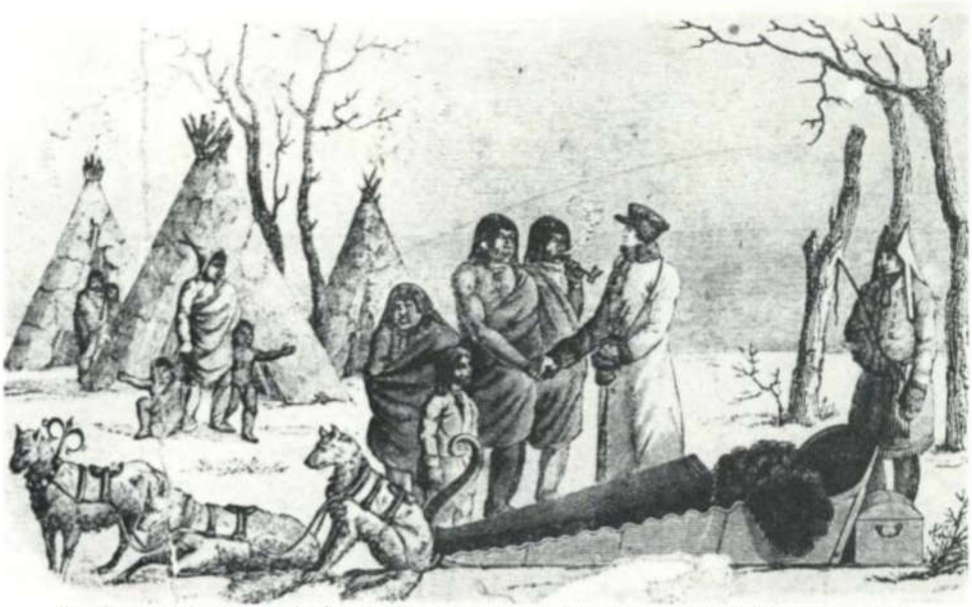


'Building Canoes—Squaws Stitching the Birch-bark'. From Hind's 'Explorations in the Interior of the Labrador Peninsula' published in 1863.

and the children usually returned to her own people. This was in conformity with Cree custom, as expounded by Andrew Graham: 'Should the husband conceive a dislike for his wife for misbehaviour, or for any other cause, he will part with her at once, and she returns to her own relations with her children.' These Bayside unions, though in some cases long lasting, were more Indian than European in form. Polygamy and serial monogamy were not uncommon, even if we leave out of account the wife and children which an officer often maintained in Britain. The rub came, for some servants at least, over the children. Graham himself, though married to a Scottish woman, was involved in protracted correspondence with the Committee over his wish to have two of his Bay children, a son and a daughter, sent to England. After much hesitation, Graham's request was allowed, as were those of James Isham and Humphrey Marten with regard to their sons. These were exceptions. When a Company servant died, or retired, there was usually little alternative for his Bayside partner and children but to return to Indian life, unless another Company man was willing to take responsibility for them. Most children of these unions were given, and kept, Indian names. For them a future outside the confines of the fur-trade country was difficult to envisage, and except for the few sent to Britain they grew up as Indians.

By the third quarter of the eighteenth century a situation had arisen in which many Company officers and at least some of the men had developed family ties in the Bay, but had to face severance of these ties on retirement. There was neither opportunity for them to settle in or near the Bay after leaving the Company's service, nor for them to take their Indian wives and native-born children to Britain. Although the outright prohibition of such relationships by the Company had ceased, and it had for some time been aware of the growing problem as its servants made arrangements through wills and annuities for their dependants in the Bay, it gave little outward sign of recognizing the dilemma. Step by step the Company had retreated from its original stand, but always it seemed grudgingly and through force of circumstances. It was circumstances which once again prompted a shift, as communities of mixed-bloods developed around the Bayside factories. Already in the 1740s Isham was referring to native-born children around York as 'pretty Numerious', and by the 1770s William Falconer at Severn noted that at each of the factories there was 'a breed of People easily distinguishable from the real Indians by their Lighter coloured hair.' These youths, possessing rudimentary English and certain basic skills, made themselves useful at the factories, in whose records they were usually listed, neither as English or Indian, but as 'natives of Hudson's Bay'. More influential was the role of the daughters, for it was they—rather than the full-blooded Indian women—who now began to provide partners for the incoming Company officers. As Sylvia Van Kirk has pointed out, 'With her dual heritage, the mixed-blood woman possessed the ideal qualifications for a fur trader's wife: acclimatized to life in the West and familiar with Indian ways, she could also make a successful adaptation to white culture.' As the numbers of Indian partners declined, so did Indian influences more generally, and the fur-trade marriage became increasingly European in outlook, with implications of permanent union and financial responsibility.

Before the end of the century the London Committee was responding, if in piecemeal fashion, to the new situation represented by the emergence of a distinctive fur-trade community in the Bay. Its recognition of the existence of native-born children at the factories was shown in 1794 when it sent out school books. A more decisive step came four years later when it decided not to engage any more servants in Britain under the age of eighteen. This dropping of a practice first adopted in the 1680s presumably had some link with the realization that around the Bay posts now lived youths who through paternal direction and indigenous upbringing were well equipped to do many of the tasks formerly undertaken by apprentices sent out, at some cost, from England. Jennifer Brown has analysed the Moose Factory journals of this period, and they show an increasing acknowledgment of the traders' native-born children. By the late 1790s these appear openly in the records as 'Factory Boys', and their duties are listed—yoking cattle, sledging timber, fishing, snaring small game, waiting at table, helping the shipwright and cooper. In 1803 the factor, John Thomas, informed the London Committee that the services of the mixed-bloods, who as they grew up were being used in the roughest areas of competition against the Canadians, 'are becoming every year more & more conspicuous'. Their presence was particularly welcome since war in Europe had brought the usual problems of obtaining men for the Bay. Only in formal education did they compare unfavourably with the apprentices, and in an effort to remedy this situation the Committee directed in 1806 that the children at the posts should be taught



The Reverend John West, the first Anglican clergyman at Red River, visits the Indian encampment. From his journal published in 1827.

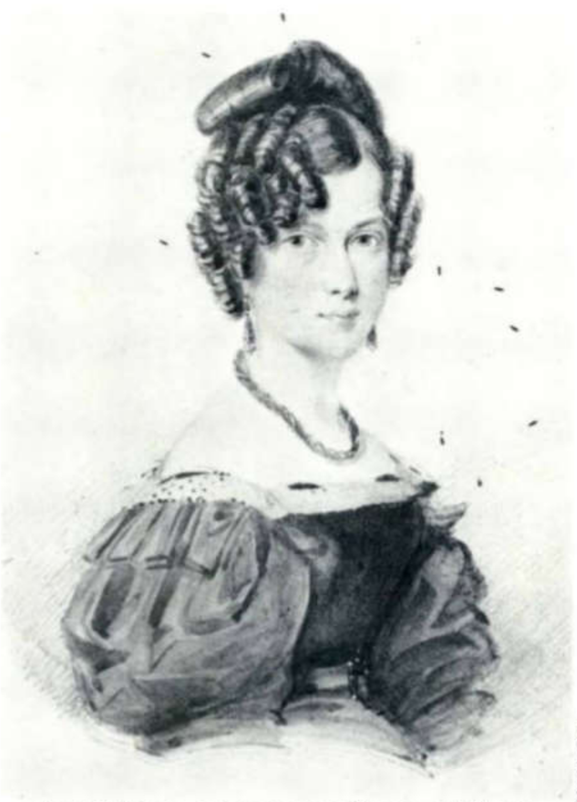
'reading, writing, arithmetical accounts, which we should hope would attach them to our Service & in a short time become a Colony of very useful Hands.' In 1808 the Committee matched words with deeds when it responded to the request of the officers in the Bay for schools to be set up which 'would not only estrange the Children from their Indian Acquaintance but present other advantages friendly to the progress of Education, Morality, and Good order.' Four schoolteachers were sent to York, Albany, Moose and Eastmain, and although their little schools faltered and failed, the effort showed the change in attitude by the Committee, moved by a mixture of philanthropic and business motives.

In the light of these changes at the Bayside the proposed settlement at Red River took on an extra dimension, for it promised to fulfil the urgent need of the fur traders for a retirement haven in a familiar environment for themselves and their country wives, with old colleagues as neighbours, yet with educational facilities available for their children. The coming of the colony gave final discouragement to unions with Indian women. 'As the colony is at length set on foot,' the Chief at York wrote to one of his officers, 'and there is a prospect of civilization diffusing among us in a few years, I would not advise you for the sake of the rising generation to consent to either officers or men contracting matrimonial connections unless with the daughters of Englishmen.' In the North West Company, too, concerned about the large number of dependants at its posts (perhaps as many as fifteen hundred women and children), attitudes were stiffening, and in 1806 the wintering partners forbade country marriages with Indian women. In the well-established fur-trade areas the commercial usefulness of such marriages was now slight, and elsewhere traders' relations with Indian women were often causes of dispute. Altogether, the mixed-blood woman seemed to offer a more manageable and attractive alternative to the servants of both companies.

Problems remained, however. With rivalry between the Hudson's Bay men and the North Westers at its sharpest in the second decade of the nineteenth century, the settlement at Red River had a precarious first few years of existence. As its future became more assured, then the implications of the new colony were not altogether comfortable, either for the retiring fur traders and their country families who moved there or for those men still active at the trading posts. In 1820 the first Anglican clergyman, the Reverend John West of the Church Missionary Society, reached the settlement. To West and his successors, David Jones and William Cockran, marriage *à la façon du pays* was a denial of the authority of the Church, an unchristian example of 'living in sin', and totally unacceptable. The impact of the colony was felt in other ways, as educational establishments were set up whose aim was assimilation of the pupil to English ways, and a denial of their indigenous heritage. The coalition of 1821 added to the uncertainty which was now beginning to affect the country unions, for the attitude of the North Westers (who in numbers at least seemed to be dominant in the upper echelons of the new company) to their Indian or mixed-blood partners had generally been more casual than that of the Hudson's Bay men at their long-established factories. Above all, the economy measures taken after the coalition pushed hundreds of redundant fur traders and their families towards Red River, where the English-speaking mixed-bloods from the old Hudson's Bay Company areas remained distinct from the French-speaking Métis formerly associated with the North West Company.

To many, the new era was summed up in the hard, dominant personality of George Simpson. Although his early experiences in Athabasca had shown him that 'Connubial alliances are the best security we can have of the goodwill of the Natives', Simpson looked sourly on the sexual and domestic entanglements of his officers. The influence of 'petty coat politicians' was one of the problems he identified on his first visit to the Columbia in 1824. There, he wrote of the Chief Factors and Chief Traders, 'business is frequently a matter of secondary consideration compared to little family affairs and domestic arrangements, that their people and Craft are employed in transporting Women & Children with their Baggage Pots Pans Kettles & Bags of Moss'. During the 1820s Simpson had relationships of varying degrees of seriousness with several Indian or mixed-blood women, but in 1830 he set the fur-trade country buzzing when he brought back from Britain a young English wife. There had been some white women, Scottish or Swiss, among the early Red River settlers; and these had been joined by the wives of the first clergy. Within Company circles, the wife of William Williams, Governor of the Southern Department until 1826, came out from England in 1822, as did the wife of Captain R. P. Pelly, Governor of Red River. In 1825 the latter returned home because of Mrs Pelly's poor health, but the next Governor of the settlement, the old fur trader Donald McKenzie, took a Swiss woman as his wife despite his earlier comment that the settlers were a 'degenerate heterogeneous mass . . . . refuse of different nations huddled together in this distant corner'.

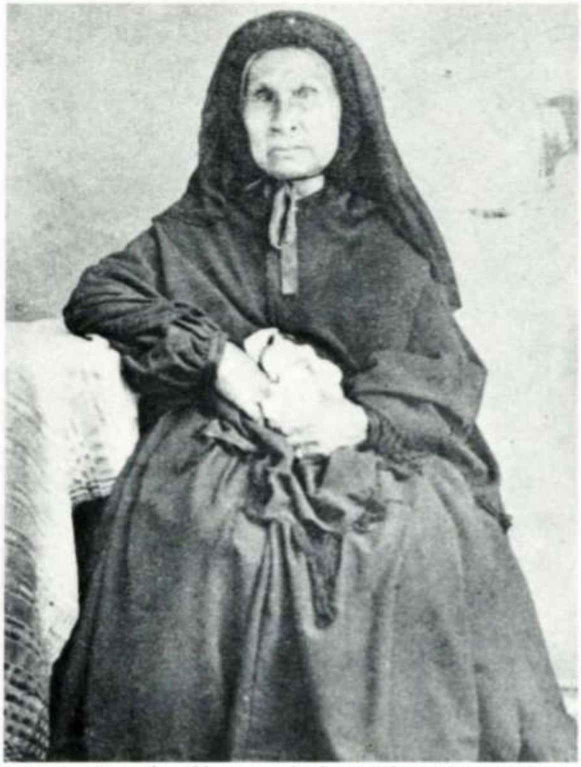
To Simpson, these were unwelcome developments. Of Mrs Pelly he wrote that she 'appears to be a delicate woman and does not yet seem quite at home among us', while more generally he observed that 'native women are a serious incumbrance but with women from the civilized world, it is quite impossible the gentlemen can do their duty'. Within a few years he had changed his mind on this last point, at least as far as senior officers of the Company were concerned. During his furlough in 1829-30 he married his eighteen-year-old cousin, Frances, while his friend and old North Wester, Chief Factor John G. McTavish, took a Scottish bride during the same winter; and both men were determined to bring their wives back to the fur-trade country with them. Simpson's former confidential secretary, Donald Ross, sensed trouble as he wrote from Edinburgh a few days after McTavish's wedding: 'the presence of these ladies will somewhat alarm our poor homespun country squaws, to some of them at least it will be anything but a gratifying sight'. Simpson and McTavish had country wives and children awaiting their return, and although these were quickly bundled out of sight, widespread embarrassment and resentment remained. Of the twenty-five Chief Factors at the time only one (Duncan Finlayson) appears never to have taken a country wife; they were nearly *'all Family Men'*, as Simpson had once complained. The unexpected appearance of their Governor and another senior officer with white wives confronted some Company servants and their mixed-blood wives with immediate problems. At Moose, McTavish alienated some of his most experienced officers by refusing to let his wife Catherine mix with their country wives; and at Red River, where he began to build the great stone house at Lower Fort Garry for himself and his bride, Simpson adopted the same brusque attitude. Colin Robertson, among others, was sharply rebuffed when he tried to introduce his mixed-blood wife of many years standing to Frances Simpson. The reported comments of Frances on Nancy McKenzie (Matooskie, McTavish's discarded country wife) are revealing: 'a complete savage, with a coarse blue sort of woollen gown without shape & a blanket fastened round her neck.' Simpson had always tended to talk of his women in crude and cynical terms, and if his private remarks on mixed-blood partners—'the commodity', 'his bit of brown', 'his bit of circulating copper'— were repeated more publicly many of his subordinates had reason to feel humiliated and angry.



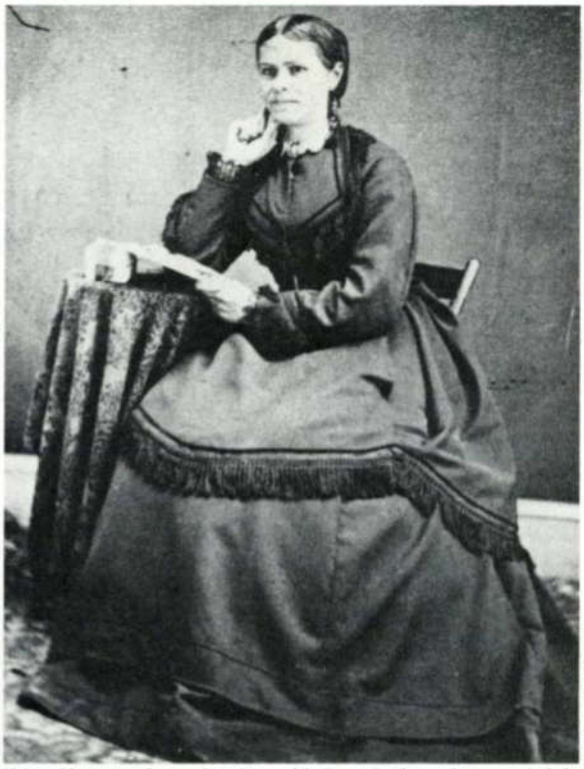
Mrs M. Porritt

Frances Simpson, cousin of George Simpson, and his wife at the age of 18.

Simpson by his actions had personalized and drama-



Sally, daughter of an Okanagan chief and wife of Alexander Ross. The couple brought up their thirteen children at Red River.



When Henrietta Ross, daughter of Sally and Alexander, married the Reverend John Black, Red River society predicted that his choice of 'a native' would be detrimental to his ministry.

tized a situation which was bound to develop in time. The Red River colony represented a wedge of conventional British values thrust into the hitherto closed country of the fur trade where, as one trader explained in 1822, 'the Customs and habits we imbibe are so different to those of the civilized world'. Simpson's marital example was followed by other Company officers, and amid the turmoil Simpson took wry comfort in the fact that even some of his critics followed his matrimonial lead 'where a proper opportunity offers'. The pressures arising from the drift into Red River of settlers from Ontario or Britain, the proselytizing activities of the Anglican clergy, and the new example set by Simpson and some of his officers, who saw a white wife as a social necessity and an aid to promotion, all served to bring uneasiness and instability into the family life of many fur traders. As in other parts of the world, the arrival of white women heightened awareness of colour: 'this influx of white faces has cast a still deeper shade over the faces of our Brunettes in the eyes of many', James Hargrave observed. One or two senior officers, notably Chief Factor John Dugald Cameron, still had full-blooded Indian wives, but this was becoming a rarity. Indian women were now regarded only in terms of the most casual liaisons, and when in 1837 Chief Trader Richard Grant took one to wife *à la façon du pays* there was consternation among his superiors. As one wrote later, 'his ideas about love and the sex were too primitive to suit the atmosphere of the world as it is *now*'.

Yet outside Red River the impact of the changes should not be exaggerated. Whatever status a white wife carried, the problems she faced in adjusting to the new conditions were formidable. The delicacy of deportment which attracted Company officers was often matched by fragility of constitution. Frances Simpson provided a clear example of this. She found life at Red River tedious and depressing, and in 1833 she left for good. Yet the settlement represented an oasis of civilization compared with the rigours of life at a fur-trade post which other white women experienced. Living in rough accommodation, and unlike their Indian and mixed-blood predecessors, with no obvious practical role in the trade, they tended to break down in health, return home, or persuade their husbands to retire early. James Douglas summed up the sequence of events in 1840: 'Indian wives were at one time the vogue, the half breed supplanted these, and now we have the lovely tender exotic torn from its parent bed, to pine and languish in the desert'.

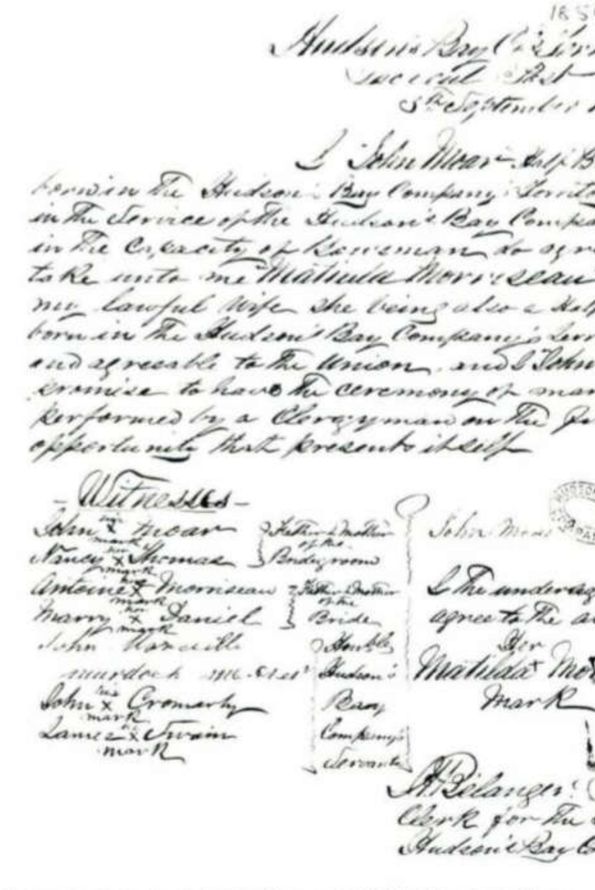
Although now under attack from different directions, the country marriages showed tenacity in both personal and institutional terms. Charles Ross away in the wilds of New Caledonia expressed the opinions of many when he wrote of his mixed-blood wife: 'She is not indeed exactly fitted to shine at the head of a nobleman's table, but she suits the sphere she has to move in better than any such toy'. At another level, the country marriage became regularized with the introduction by the Company of a formal document, to be signed and witnessed. From 1836 onwards those Chief Factors who were Justices of the Peace were allowed to conduct civil marriage ceremonies, and in 1845 the Council of the Northern Department extended this right to all Chief Factors. The couple were also advised that the sanction of the church should be obtained as soon as practical, a recommendation which only partly met the clergy's insistence on a church marriage. It was nearer the more liberal Roman Catholic view that the religious ceremony had the effect of 'renewing and ratifying their mutual consent of marriage', but that even without this a 'natural marriage' existed. With few missionaries to be found outside the main settlements, this sanction was not always possible, and some of the clergy proved so insensitive on the question of country marriages that even when on hand they were unable to persuade the fur traders to accept their services. Most notorious was the Reverend Herbert Beaver at Fort Vancouver in the late 1830s who received a well-publicized thrashing from John McLoughlin for his references to the Chief Factor's respected country wife as a 'kept Mistress', 'a female of notoriously loose character'. The more amenable James Douglas allowed the missionary to marry him to his mixed-blood partner, but soon found it necessary to remind Beaver of the acknowledged status of the country wife 'who lives chastely with the husband of her choice, in a state approved by friends and sanctioned by immemorial custom'.

For a time at least the country marriages also withstood the scrutiny of the law courts, which heard cases in which the European relatives of fur traders tried to disinherit the country-born families. There were difficulties over the wills of both Samuel Black and Peter Skene Ogden, but in 1867 Chief Justice Monk firmly declared that at least one country marriage in dispute (that of the North Wester William Connolly and his Cree bride Suzanne early in the century) had been valid. 'There would be no law, no justice, no sense, no morality', he pronounced, in denying the legality of 'this union . . . persisted in for such a long period of years, characterized by inviolable fidelity and devotion on both sides, and made more sacred by the birth and education of a numerous family'. Even Simpson, antagonised by the attitude of some of the wives of the clergy, had changed his tune. By the late 1840s he was complaining that 'imported wives, fancy themselves such great women that there is no possibility of pleasing them', and that they affected 'a supercilious air of superiority over the native wives and daughters of gentlemen in the country.' Country wives, on the other hand, Simpson now found 'tolerably manageable'.

If the spread of new attitudes and conventions was slower than the events of 1830 had suggested, yet the process of change towards the rigid conformities of Victorian society was inexorable. Red River remained a hotbed of

Archives of Ontario

Kilakotah, Chinook wife of James McMillan who abandoned her to search for a lady of 'genteel accomplishment and dutiful obedience'.


1859 316

Hudson's Bay Co's Territory
[illegible] Post
5th September 1859

I John Moar Half Breed born in the Hudson's Bay Company's Territory am in the Service of the Hudson's Bay Company in the Capacity of Bowsman do agree to take unto me Matilda Morriseau for my lawful Wife she being also a HalfBreed born in the Hudson's Bay Company's Territory and agreeable to the Union, and I John Moar promise to have the ceremony of marriage performed by a Clergyman on the first opportunity that presents itself

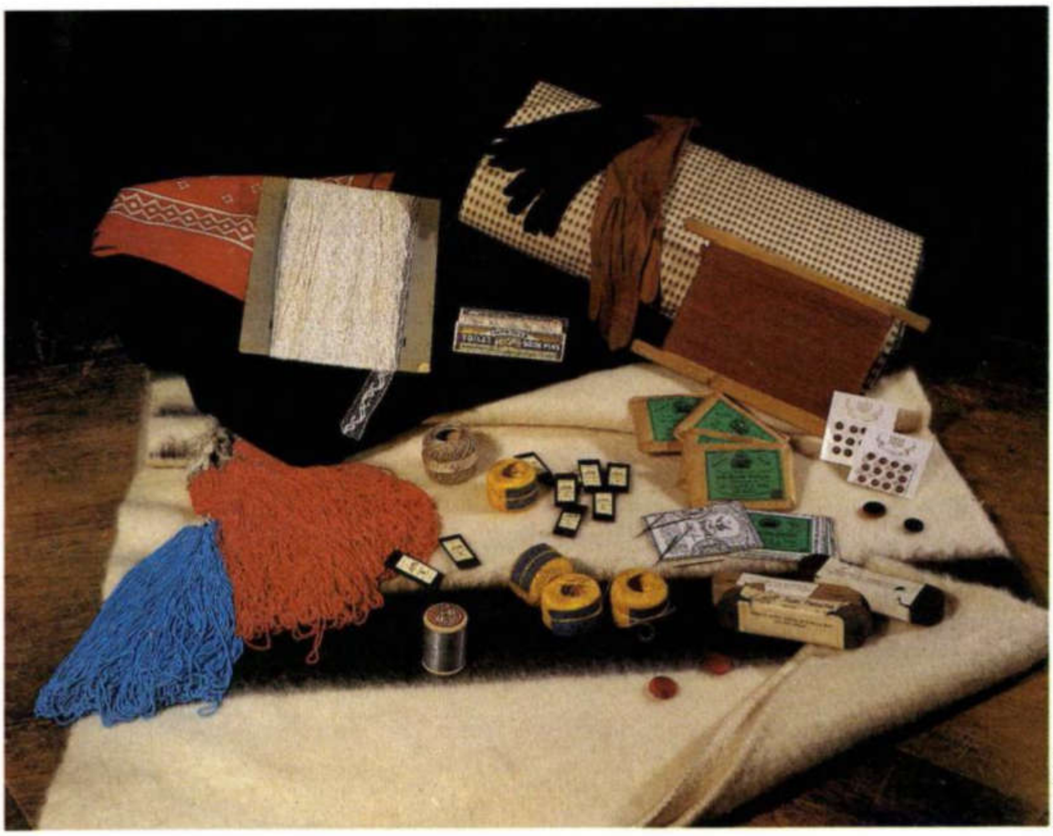
Witnesses
John his x mark Moar
Nancy her x mark Thomas } Father & Mother of the Bridegroom
Antoine his x mark Morriseau
Mary her x mark Daniel } Father & Mother of the Bride
John [illegible]
Murdoch McLeod
John his x mark Cromarty
James his x mark Swain } Hon'ble Hudson's Bay Company's Servants

John Moar
Hudson's Bay Company

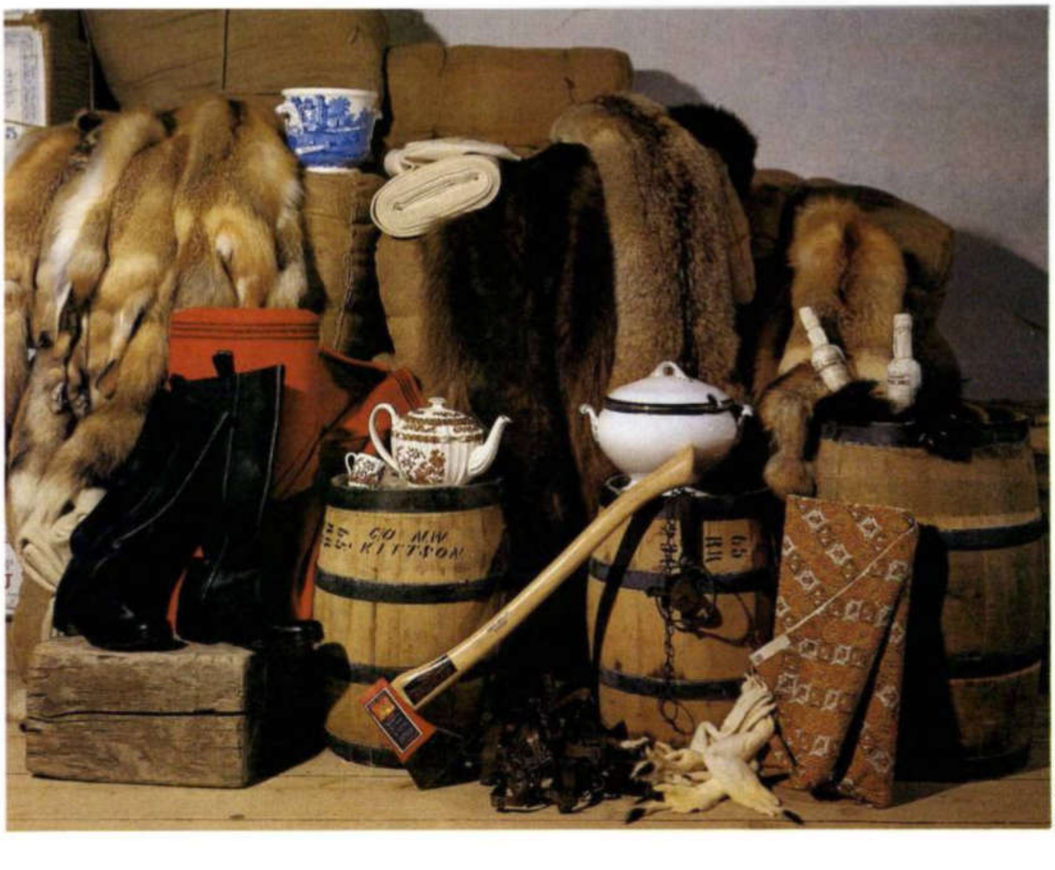
I the undersigned agree to the above
Her
Matilda x Morriseau
mark

A. Belanger
Clerk for the Hon'ble Hudson's Bay Company

The marriage contract of John Moar and Matilda Morriseau, drawn up by a Company clerk, contains the promise to have the marriage performed by a clergyman 'on the first opportunity'.


Chris Grant

Trade goods of the 1850s reflect an interest in fashion and the home.
Above: Kerchief, lace, gloves, bolt of cloth and braid trim, beads, needles, thread and buttons.
Below: Spode china, leather boots, bolts of cloth, and bottles of Lea & Perrins' Worcestershire sauce.
From the Hudson's Bay Company's Historical Collection, Lower Fort Garry.



Chris Grant

tension and gossip, twenty years after Simpson and his young wife had complained of its 'most Vindictive & Malicious intrigue'. Jennifer Brown has shown that native-born children who went to live in Britain or Canada experienced less racial discrimination than those concentrated at Red River. There, although mixed-blood families had firmly established themselves, the celebrated court case of 1850 involving Sarah Ballenden, the mixed-blood wife of the senior Company officer in the colony, and Captain Christopher Foss, showed a community split on racial lines. More rankling than this melodramatic episode was the continued prejudice shown against the children, and especially the sons, of mixed-blood marriages. A reading of Simpson's notes, cast into comprehensive form in his Character Book of 1832, reveals his distrust of the native-born in the Company's employ. Even John Kennedy, a young servant with a medical degree from Edinburgh, was dismissed with the curt comment, 'Country and Color disqualify him . . . if he turns out well . . . I shall be agreeably surprised'. Simpson was not alone in his opinion. John Tod, who also had mixed-blood children, wrote of 'half-breeds' in 1843: 'The fact is there is something radically wrong about them all as is evidently shown from mental science alone I mean Phrenology, the truths of which I have lately convinced myself from extensive personal observation.' In the same year Captain J. H. Lefroy, a conventionally-educated English army officer, reacted with distaste to the sight of the mixed-blood children of Company servants at their school at Red River: 'there were about 20 girls and nearly as many boys there, coarse looking animals, with little stamp of quality, not one pretty face'.

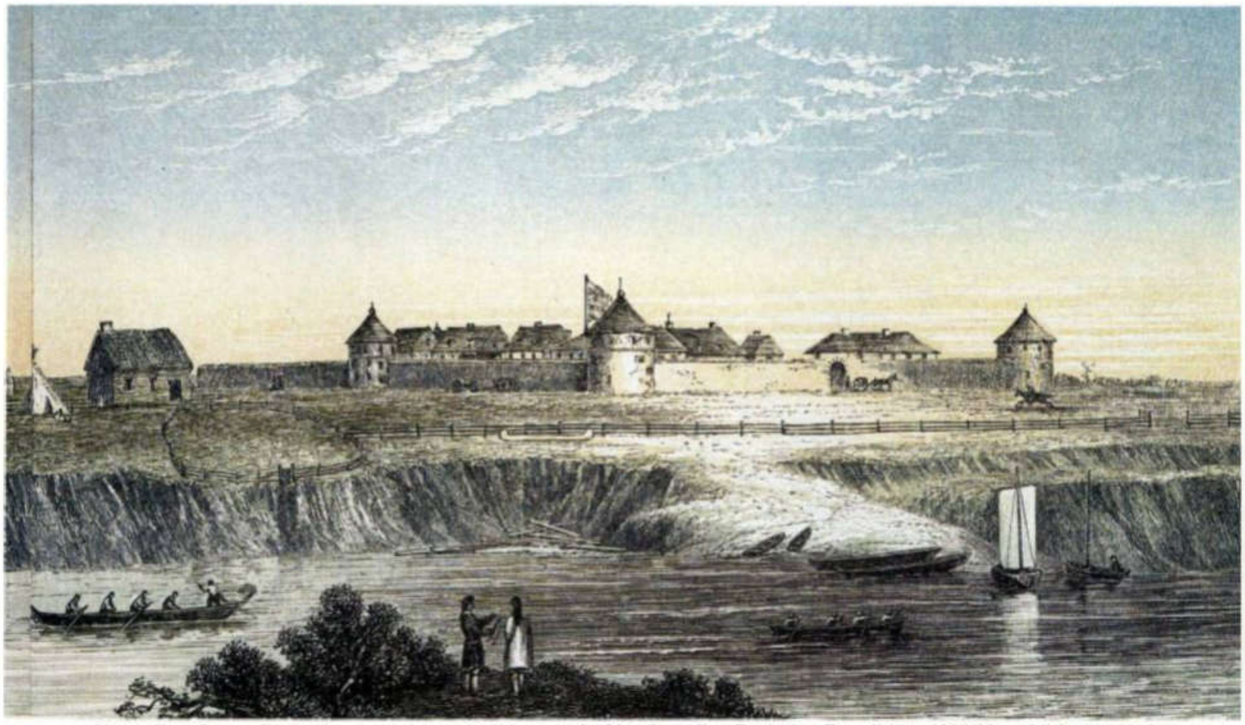
Although in some respects Red River was unique, the pattern of events elsewhere in the fur-trade country was repeated on the Pacific coast, where the rival demands of the fur trade and white settlement had by mid-century produced a situation which had awkward social as well as economic implications. As the Company after coalition expanded along the coast in the face of American and Russian competition, and among tribes of uncertain disposition, liaisons with Indian women helped Company servants and Company trade. Archibald McDonald encouraged his men at Fort Langley to take Indian wives on the grounds, as he explained in 1830, 'It has the effect of reconciling them to this place.' At Fort Simpson the country marriage of John Kennedy to the daughter of the Tsimshian chief, Legaic, brought commercial benefits to the Company, while the union between William McNeill, master of the *Beaver* steamer, to an Indian woman in the Nass region had obvious advantages. There is a reflection here of needs and motives from earlier days and other regions of the fur trade, but it was to be a transitory one, for along the coast from the Columbia to Vancouver Island white settlers were arriving. The telescoping of developments is shown in the career of James Douglas, who as we have seen rose through the fur trade to a colonial governorship, and was knighted in 1863 shortly before his retirement. He had taken Amelia Connolly, the part-Indian daughter of a Company officer, as his wife *à la façon du pays* in 1828, and it was this union which was formalized by the Reverend Beaver in a church ceremony in 1837. Douglas remained a devoted husband and family man as he rose to prominence, but his transformation into an officer of the Crown was made not so much with Amelia at his side as out of sight. Despite her relative lightness of colour, she experienced coolness or 'uppishness' from white women on the coast. Her difficulty with English did not help, and as late as 1861 a visitor wrote: 'Have I explained that her mother was an Indian woman, & that she keeps very much (far too much) in the background; indeed it is only lately that she has been persuaded to see visitors'.

Lady Douglas in her Widowhood

Archives of British Columbia

Lady Douglas, wife of James Douglas and daughter of Chief Factor William Connolly and his Cree wife, who experienced 'uppishness' from white women on the coast.

With the fur trade retreating from the areas of settlement into the remoter and wilder regions, so its distinctive family life became less visible. Whether in the ethnically complex community of Red River, or in British Columbia, with its separate European and Indian peoples, the orthodox racial attitudes of white settlement were dominant by the time of the surrender of the charter. By then the contact of races, the mixture of blood, the exchange of skills and customs, which had marked the fur trade from its earliest days, were fading fast. ◆



Upper Fort Garry. From Henry Youle Hind's 'Narrative' of his Canadian Exploring Expeditions 1857-58, published in 1860.

X. LAST YEARS OF COMPANY MONOPOLY AND RULE

BY THE MID-NINETEENTH CENTURY the more perceptive officials of the Hudson's Bay Company recognized that its trading monopoly and political rights could not be maintained indefinitely. The Oregon crisis had been a warning of pressures to come: settler demands, international tensions, and involvement in the domestic politics of Britain and Canada. As the Company reorganized its operations on the Pacific coast after the 1846 Treaty and negotiated for the grant of Vancouver Island, it was challenged by opposition in Parliament, notably from Gladstone, who denounced its 'monopoly of land and trade . . . aggravated by absolutism in politics covered by the cloak of impenetrable secrecy.' In Canada, politicians and newspapers were beginning to draw attention to the vast, unpeopled and unsurveyed areas to the west which lay under the Company's commercial sway. The President of the Executive Council was to declare, 'No charter can give a body of men control over half a continent'. American encroachment and annexation seemed serious possibilities, especially at Red River, where trade in furs and other goods was rapidly increasing with the new American settlements in Minnesota. As the free traders from Red River seeped north into the Company's chartered territories, so Chief Factor Donald Ross at Norway House wrote to Simpson in 1848 in despondent terms. The Company, he thought, should abandon its territorial and trading rights rather

> than to continue holding them in their rather precarious and not very profitable footing . . . free trade notions and the course of events are making such rapid progress, that the day is certainly not far distant, when ours, the last important British monopoly, will necessarily be swept away like all others, by the force of public opinion, or by the still more undesirable but inevitable course of violence and misrule within the country itself.

At Red River the colony presented problems of law and order which the Company was unable to resolve. The stationing there of British troops in 1846 at the time of tension with the United States over the Oregon affair had a temporary calming effect—'the presence of the red coats has made us draw in our horns like so many snails', wrote Alexander Ross—but they were gone within two years. The economic development of the area was being drawn in a southerly direction as the Americans opened steamer, rail and postal services to St Paul. As in Oregon, the hard facts of geography and demography were against the Company. The broad valley of the Red River made links between the colony and Minnesota easier than those across difficult terrain east to Fort William or north to York Factory. Within the settlement, the still-limited markets for the produce of farm and hunt increased the attraction of the fur trade. The free traders following the cart trails out from Red River were, in W. L. Morton's words, 'the scavengers of the trade . . . sweeping up the last remnants of the once great trade in the Winnipeg basin, the westward plains, and the Saskatchewan valley.' Attempts by the Company to restrict their activities resulted in complaints orchestrated by Alexander Isbister, whose petition of 1847 was published as a pamphlet entitled *A Few Words on the Hudson's Bay Company*. It appealed to both free trading and humanitarian sentiments in Britain. The Company was branded as 'the only survivor of the numerous exclusive bodies which at one time depressed almost every branch of British commerce', while its Indian trade was seen as one based on intimidation and debauchery. The Indians were kept in a 'state of utter dependence', doomed 'to pass their lives in the darkest heathenism'. John McLean's embittered recollections in *Notes of a Twenty-Five Years' Service in the Hudson's Bay Territory,* published in 1849, depicted the Company as an autocratic and callous employer—'an authority combining the despotism of military rule with the strict surveillance and mean parsimony of the avaricious trader'. The challenge to the Company faltered and died away in the face of the conviction by the Colonial Office and Parliament that the Company and the fur trade were still essential to the stability of the Northwest but with an unfavourable climate of opinion evident in some quarters on both sides of the Atlantic, drastic action against the encroaching free traders seemed inadvisable. In 1856 Simpson echoed Ross's forebodings when he admitted that 'The Company's Charter, as far as exclusive right of trade goes, is almost a nullity:—as we are unable to enforce its provisions, it is set at nought by the Americans and their Half-breed allies.'

The licence for exclusive trade granted in 1821 (and renewed in 1838) was due to expire in 1859, and two years before a decision on this was needed the British government set up a Select Committee of the House of Commons to inquire into the Company's position and practices. On trading methods the Company emerged almost unscathed as witnesses testified to the fair treatment accorded the Indians by Company policies and servants, and to the serious consequences if unrestricted competition were once more allowed in the fur trade. Simpson faced several hundred questions from M.P.'s—'put upon the rack for days at a time', according to one Chief Trader who was present—as he patiently explained the realities of the Indian trade. 'The Indian in the interior depends upon us for all his supplies; whether he is able to pay for them or not, he gets them; he gets his blankets, he gets his gun, and he gets his ammunition. If from death in his family, or any other cause, he makes no hunt, it cannot be helped.' In reply to another persistent line of questioning, Simpson was able to show that thirty-six mission stations had been established in the Company's chartered territories. His own attitude towards missions was perhaps too complex and ambivalent to be revealed to the Select Committee. He was ready to lend the practical help to the missionaries which they needed; but he was not prepared to have Company transportation overloaded by missionary requirements, was disturbed by any indications of interdenominational rivalry, and was wary lest missionary efforts should deflect the Indians from hunting and trapping. On the Company's policies towards settlement not even Simpson was totally convincing, and in the subsequent Parliamentary debate Viscount Bury insisted that 'The real point at issue was whether the Company should continue their monopoly, should keep closed doors, should put up a "no thoroughfare" board at every inlet into this country, or whether it should be thrown open to the enterprise of all Her Majesty's subjects.'

The Select Committee, together with other interested bodies, suffered from a lack of reliable information about the potential of the West for agricultural settlement. The fog of ignorance was now to be dispelled by surveying expeditions pushing out from Canada to the plains and mountains, most notably those of Henry Youle Hind in 1857-8 (under Canadian government auspices) and John Palliser in 1857-60 (sponsored by the Royal Geographical Society with financial help by the British government). Their investigations were directed towards very different ends from those of the fur trader, the missionary and the Métis. Advancing into the region lying between latitude 49°N. and 53°N., and longitude 100°W. and 115°W., they were primarily interested in the country's agricultural potential. The familiar waterways of the fur trade lay well to the north, and although the Hudson's Bay Company had set up posts on the South Saskatchewan and Bow rivers in the 1820s and 1830s it soon withdrew. Much of this region lay within the hunting territories of the Blackfoot, traditional enemies of the Cree and Assiniboine of the North Saskatchewan, and with a reputation fierce enough to discourage casual traders and travellers. Hind progressed as far as the Lower Saskatchewan and Qu'Appelle rivers; Palliser on his more ambitious and important enterprise crossed the plains to the Rockies and beyond. The reports, journals and books of the two expeditions provide a unique impression of the Canadian West, its

Indians, fur traders and Métis buffalo hunters, at the moment before settlement moved beyond Red River.

Palliser's experiences convinced him of 'the justice and good faith' which the Company showed towards the Indians, and he viewed with anxiety the encroaching free traders, and in particular what would become of the Indians if the Company were overthrown.

> I feel persuaded that the *Greatest Calamity* that could befal *the Indian* wd be to distroy the *present Fur trade* and its immense ramifications The traders thoroughly know their work and how to do it, with their systim they convey within the reach of every Indian in the territories the means of hunting and the necessaries for his existence and their annihilation wd produce the misery and distruction of thousands of Indians.

Equally, he could see the case of the free traders from Red River—'inhabitants of the Indian land and born on its soil These people most of them Half Breeds are British subjects and whatever the rights and privileges of the Hudson Bay Company may be under the Charter, *They think* it a *very hard case* that they should be debarred from trading in the land of their birth'. Palliser's recommendations on how best to deal with the conflicting claims of Company, Indians and free traders were ignored. The results of his survey, on the other hand, were eagerly accepted by the pro-settlement lobby. His phrase, the Fertile Belt, referring to the area between the arid plains country of the American border and the wooded regions to the north, caught the imagination and was inflated, not least by Hind in his *Narrative* of 1860, to mean a 'continuous belt' which 'can be settled and cultivated from a few miles west of the Lake of the Woods to the passes of the Rocky Mountains.' The publications associated with the Hind and Palliser expeditions marked a decisive step in the transformation of the image of the Northwest from a frozen waste of trappers, arctic explorers and furs, to a region whose southerly parts were ripe for agriculture and settlement.

In 1859 the Company's licence for exclusive trade was not renewed, and although it retained its territorial rights it seemed only a matter of time before these disappeared. Money as well as time was involved, however, and for most of the next decade the Company, and governments in Britain and Canada, engaged in difficult negotiations to bring about a transfer acceptable to all three parties and unduly costly to none. The Company itself was bought out by Edward Watkin in 1863, backed by the International Financial Society, a consortium of some of the most important banking houses in the City of London, in a move to realize the settlement, mineral and communication potential of the Company's territories. The new stockholders were less interested in the fur regions of the North than in the southern parts of Rupert's Land; and suspicion about the sale among the Company's officers in North America was increased by the fact that

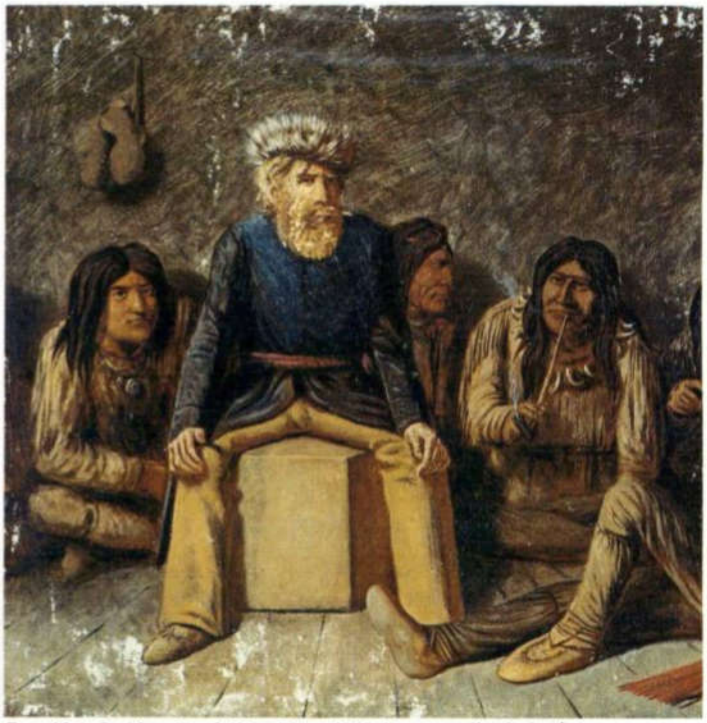
York boat crew moving their heavy wooden craft over a shallow spot on the route between York Factory and Norway House.

HBC Collection

it had taken place without any consultation with them. Their once slow-moving world of the Indian trade seemed to be shifting and crumbling in every direction, and their letters to each other and the London Committee (where only two of the old directors survived) reflected their concern.

Ironically, at the very time when the Company was entering this period of uncertainty, the fur trade was experiencing an Indian summer. In 1855 the return on a Chief Factor's share reached its peak at £872. As Simpson told the Select Committee two years later, fur exports were 'larger now than it was at any time within my recollection'. Beaver was in decline because of the competition from the cheaper silk hat, and its future was to be as a 'fancy fur' for coats and other garments; but marten and other furs from the Mackenzie basin, the Yukon and elsewhere compensated. Ellice summed up for the benefit of the Select Committee the pattern of change in the previous half-century: 'All the countries easily reached have been entirely destroyed. The valuable trade of the Hudson's Bay Company is in the remote districts . . . I should think to the northward of 60°; very far north.' These distant preserves of the fur trade enabled the Company to continue the battle against competitors in the border areas, where many of the traditional conventions of the trade were being abandoned. Indians demanded cash and flour rather than the customary 'outfit' for the winter. Not satisfied with 'useful articles of clothing', they were more interested, Simpson noticed, in 'fine white shirts, superfine frock coats and straw bonnets for their women'. In these areas the Made Beaver standard was discontinued, to the irritation and bemusement of some traders. As one observed, 'Whoever was the Hudson's Bay official who superseded the simple "skin way" for the "money way" of trading with the Indians, he certainly gave us no end of torment and trouble.'

Also disappearing were some of the time-honoured trade routes. One of Palliser's party, Lieutenant Blakiston, followed the customary route from York Factory to Norway House and Red River in 1857. His report illustrated the problems for boats 42 feet long loaded with 56 cwt. of goods: 'portage after portage, with occasional intervening lakes, succeed one another in rapid succession, over some of which the boats have to be carried, but at others hauled up the rapids by ropes, and the cargoes carried over land'. Little wonder that Blakiston concluded that 'the natural outlet of this great western district is across an easy country to the water of the Mississippi and Missouri', though he balked at the political implications of this. It was symbolic that in 1859 Simpson himself, greatest of the canoe travellers, made his last journey to Red River by way of St Paul. Later that year he ordered that furs from the upper lakes should no longer go to Moose, but by steamer and rail to Toronto. In the same year goods were sent by rail from Montreal to St Paul, and then by steamer to Red River; and in 1862 with a steamer operating almost exclusively for the Company the London Committee accepted that the route 'must henceforth be regarded as one of the ordinary means of introducing supplies to the chartered territory.' As Fort Garry replaced York Factory in the 1860s as the main distribution centre for the trade, so increasing use was made of Métis drivers and their carts to move goods for the Company.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Donald A. Smith at North West River, 1860. From an oil painting by W. G. R. Hind.

The new flexibility of the Company's transport system was matched by a lessening dependence on a regular work-force on long-term contracts stationed at permanent posts. Casual and seasonal labour increased, and in the areas across the path of advancing settlement from Canada posts were closed down. As Simpson's successor, Alexander Grant Dallas, explained in 1863:

> Such establishments in the Indian country are necessary and comparatively inexpensive; but as soon as settlement goes on around them, the cost of maintenance is increased and the posts themselves become really unnecessary; as our officers and servants can be more economically kept as boarders in hotels,—in fact the servants can be entirely dispensed with and the number of officers reduced.

It was another sign of the times that Dallas had never served as a field officer, just as from 1863 onwards the Governorship of the Company was to be filled by public figures of political standing rather than business experience such as Sir Edmund Head (1863-8) and Sir

Stafford Northcote (1869-74). Simpson, Pelly and Colvile were all gone, and with them much hard-earned knowledge of the fur trade.

In London a variety of schemes dealing with the Company's future appeared and disappeared, but there was little hope of a decision during the protracted Canadian confederation negotiations of 1864-7. The coming into existence of the Dominion of Canada after discussions in which the prospects of westward expansion had played a significant part, and the more positive role adopted by the British government, finally produced a settlement in 1869. The Company agreed to surrender Rupert's Land to the Crown, which was to transfer it to Canada. The Dominion government, helped if necessary by a loan from Britain, was to pay £300,000 in compensation to the Company, which would be allowed to keep its 120 trading posts with adjoining land, and could claim one-twentieth of the land allocated in the next fifty years in the Fertile Belt. The transfer was arranged for 1 December 1869, though the Riel uprising delayed matters until 15 July 1870.

The Deed of Surrender brought renewed anxiety to the traders in their distant posts. At a time when fur sales were falling, the renegotiated Deed Poll of 1871 excluded them from any share either in land-sale profits or in the £300,000 compensation, and failed to meet their demand for a guaranteed minimum remuneration. The new agreement, in which Donald A. Smith represented the commissioned officers, was accepted with reluctance, and there was talk by some officers of setting up a new, Canadian-based company in opposition to the Hudson's Bay Company. This drew from Smith, now Chief Commissioner of the Northern Department, the admission that 'the old order is past, and that the Company is not the same as it was in our young days, but my old allegiance survives'. For most officers, there was little obvious alternative to continued service with the Company. As one Chief Factor wrote some years later, when considering whether to move from verbal protests to more decisive action, 'I am too old to pick myself up again if I fall . . . when it is a matter of bread and butter on the one hand, and starvation on the other, one may well pause.'

In broader terms, the Deed of Surrender had rescued the Company from a position in which an alarming gulf had opened between its privileges and its responsibilities, its commitments and its strengths. Stripped of the territorial implications of the charter of 1670, the Company was able to revert to its essential role as a business organization, though one which would now be as concerned with land sales as with furs. Amid the stir of high politics and financial manoeuvres, it is easy to overlook the fact that the Company continued to trade for furs, with the London Committee spending time during the winter of 1869-70 in making arrangements for the summer shipments of goods and servants. Whatever the uneasiness of the field officers about the new direction of the Company, their letters and journals show the same preoccupation with commercial tactics as ever. To read the notes on fur prices, on the trade standard with the Indians, or on developments in routes and shipping, is to be reminded of the perennial issues of the fur trade. In future this trade was to represent a diminishing part of the Company's activities. In the period from 1670 to 1870 it was dominant and continuous, less through the tenuous advantages conveyed by royal charter to the 'Governor and Company of Adventurers of England tradeing into Hudsons Bay', than because of the effectiveness and tenacity of this corporate body in the business of collecting and selling furs.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Throughout this issue excerpts from Hudson's Bay Record Society volumes and documents in the Company's Archives by permission of the Hudson's Bay Company. Quotations or excerpts from other works by permission as follows: G. P. de T. Glazebrook, ed., *The Hargrave Correspondence 1821-1843* (The Champlain Society, Toronto, 1938); Margaret A. MacLeod, ed., *The Letters of Letitia Hargrave* (The Champlain Society, 1947); Richard Glover, ed., *David Thompson's Narrative 1784-1812* (The Champlain Society, 1962); Irene M. Spry, ed., *The Papers of the Palliser Expedition 1857-1860* (The Champlain Society, 1968); Elaine A. Mitchell, *Fort Timiskaming and the Fur Trade* (University of Toronto Press, Toronto, 1977); Dorothy Blakey Smith, ed., *The Reminiscences of Doctor John Sebastian Helmcken* (University of British Columbia Press, Vancouver, 1975); Frederick Merk, ed., *Fur Trade and Empire*, rev. ed. (The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass., 1968); Sylvia Van Kirk, *'Many Tender Ties': Women in Fur Trade Society in Western Canada 1670-1870* (Watson & Dwyer Publishing Ltd., Winnipeg, 1980); Jennifer S.H. Brown, *Strangers in Blood: Fur Trade Company Families in Indian Country* (University of British Columbia Press, Vancouver, 1980); Madge Wolfenden, ed., 'John Tod: "Career of a Scotch Boy" ', *British Columbia Historical Quarterly* XVIII, 1954 (Archives of British Columbia, Victoria); G. F. G. Stanley, ed., *In Search of the Magnetic North* (Macmillan Company of Canada Ltd., Toronto, 1955).

FURTHER READING

Suggested by Glyndwr Williams

GENERAL

ALTHOUGH THIS LIST of books and articles is confined to post-1970 publications, it is hardly necessary to state that no serious study of fur-trade history can be made without reference to the magnificent documentary collections published by the Champlain Society and the Hudson's Bay Record Society (hereafter H B R S) before that date, and to the histories by E. E. Rich, Douglas MacKay, J. S. Galbraith, W. L. Morton and others. The present writer's listing of these and other publications will be found in *The Beaver* (Autumn 1970), 60-63.

Of major significance to fur-trade historians has been the publication of further volumes of the *Dictionary of Canadian Biography* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press): at the time of writing, volumes I-IV (with biographies up to date of death in 1800) and volumes IX-XI (date of death between 1861 and 1890) have appeared. Important collections of papers (some of them listed individually in later sections) have been published in Malvina Bolus, ed., *People and Pelts: Selected Papers of the Second North American Fur Trade Conference* (Winnipeg: Peguis, 1972); *Western Canadian Journal of Anthropology:* Special Issue: 'The Fur Trade in Canada', III, 1 (1972); Carol M. Judd and Arthur J. Ray, eds., *Old Trails and New Directions: Papers of the Third North American Fur Trade Conference* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1980). A. S. Morton, *A History of the Canadian West to 1870-71* has been reprinted in a second edition with annotations by Lewis G. Thomas (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1973). Another classic work, Harold A. Innis, *The Fur Trade in Canada,* has recently been the subject of an exchange of opinions by W. J. Eccles and Hugh M. Grant in *Canadian Historical Review,* LX (1979), 419-41; LXII (1981), 304-29.

I. THE EARLY YEARS

Apart from his extensive writings on this period in his *History* and in several H B R S volumes, E. E. Rich has looked again at the Company and colonization in 'The Colony of Rupert's Land', *The Beaver* (Summer 1978), 4-12; while his earlier article, 'Pro Pelle Cutem' has been reprinted in *The Beaver* (Autumn 1980), 65-9. Two other articles of interest are Murray G. Lawson, 'The Beaver Hat and the North American Fur Trade', and K.G. Davies, 'The Years of No Dividend: Finances of the Hudson's Bay Company 1690-1718', in *People and Pelts,* 27-37, 65-81 respectively. French and English documents relating to the French capture of the James Bay posts in 1686 are printed in W. A. Kenyon and J. R. Turnbull, eds., *The Battle for James Bay 1686* (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1971), together with an account of 'The Excavation of Fort Albany'.

II. CONSOLIDATION AND CRISIS

Accounts of the investigations carried out at Marble Island in 1970 and 1971 into the fate of James Knight's expedition are in Ralph Smith, 'Relics of James Knight', *The Beaver* (Spring 1972), 36-41; and Walter Zacharchuk, 'The House that Knight Built', *The Beaver* (Autumn 1973), 12-15. On Sir Bibye Lake see E. E. Rich, 'The Perpetual Governor', *The Beaver* (Autumn 1974), 18-22. A discussion of the different versions of Henday's journal is in Glyndwr Williams, 'The Puzzle of Anthony Henday's Journal, 1754-55', *The Beaver* (Winter 1978), 40-56. On the wider implications of the Dobbs attack on the Company see D. W. Moodie, 'Science and Reality: Arthur Dobbs and the eighteenth-century geography of Rupert's Land', *Journal of Historical Geography,* II (1976), 293-309.

III. LIFE BY THE BAY

Much of this section is based on the observations and journals of Isham, Graham and Hearne, all in print before 1970, together with the correspondence of Company servants, published (especially in H B R S, XXV), and unpublished, to which can be added some recent articles in *The Beaver* dealing with particular aspects of the subject: E. E. Rich, 'The Fur Traders: Their Diet and Drugs' (Summer 1976), 42-53; D. W. Moodie, 'Gardening on Hudson Bay: The First Century' (Summer 1978), 54-59; Frits Pannekoek, ' "Corruption" at Moose' (Spring 1979), 4-11.

IV. THE INDIANS AND THE BAY TRADE

Considerable research and writing has been done on this subject in recent years, but one might begin with the pioneering study by E. E. Rich, first published in 1960 as 'Trade Habits and Economic Motivation among the Indians of North America', which was reprinted with a new introduction as 'The Indian Traders', *The Beaver* (Winter 1970), 4-20. Of particular importance are the books and articles of Arthur J. Ray: *Indians in the Fur Trade: their role as trappers, hunters, and middlemen in the lands southwest of Hudson Bay 1660-1870* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1974); (with Conrad Heidenreich), *The Early Fur Trades: A Study in Cultural Interaction* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1976); (with Donald B. Freeman), *'Give Us Good Measure': an economic analysis of relations between the Indians and the Hudson's Bay Company before 1763* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1978); 'Higgling and Haggling at Ye Bay', *The Beaver* (Summer 1977), 38-46; 'Indians as Consumers in the Eighteenth Century', *Old Trails and New Directions,* 255-71. For a different viewpoint see Abraham Rotstein, 'Trade and Politics: An

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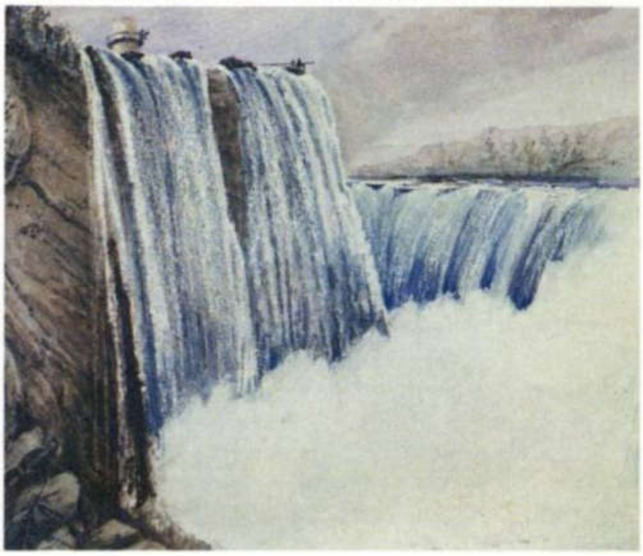

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The Fifth North American Fur Trade Conference

The Lake St. Louis Historical Society will host the 1985 North American Fur Trade Conference to be held at McGill University, May 29th to June 2nd, 1985.

The Program Committee is looking for researchers currently engaged in or contemplating fur trade related projects. The sessions planned will focus on: a) the emergent or early fur trade and its significance for Native people throughout North America. b) the Montreal based fur trade. c) Jacques Cartier, this being the 450th anniversary of his arrival at the present site of Montreal. d) wide-ranging aspects of the North American fur trade.

Archaeologists, ethnologists, historians and others interested in the fur trade are invited to participate to ensure that several perspectives be represented within each geographical region. All researchers are invited to submit a title and abstract of 100 words to the Program Committee by May 15, 1984 to: Dr. Bruce G. Trigger, Chairman, Program Committee, 5th North American Fur Trade Conference, Box 1023, Station A, Montreal, P.Q. H3C 2W9.

Additional information may be obtained by writing to V.M. Stewart, Fifth North American Fur Trade Conference, c/o Lake St. Louis Historical Society, Box 1024, Station A, Montreal, P.Q. H3C 2W9.

Institutional Approach', *Western Canadian Journal of Anthropology,* III (1972), 1-28. On the role of the Ojibwa see Charles A. Bishop, *The Northern Ojibwa and the Fur Trade* (Toronto: Holt, Rinehart and Winston of Canada, 1974); also his article, 'The Henley House Massacres', *The Beaver* (Autumn 1976), 36-41. The Albany journal for 1705-6, together with some trade tables, is in Glyndwr Williams, ed., *Hudson's Bay Miscellany 1670-1870* (H B R S, XXX, Winnipeg, 1975). More generally on the Cree of James Bay see Toby Morantz, 'The Fur Trade and the Cree of James Bay', *Old Trails and New Directions,* 39-58, and the recent book by Daniel Francis and Toby Morantz, *Partners in Furs: A History of the Fur Trade in Eastern James Bay 1600-1870* (Kingston and Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1983).

V. THE MOVE INLAND

The struggle between the companies in the hinterland of James Bay is discussed in an important study, Elaine A. Mitchell, *Fort Timiskaming and the Fur Trade* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1977), and in John A. Alwin, 'The Uncelebrated Boats of the Albany', *The Beaver* (Spring 1975), 47-53, and Shirlee A. Smith, 'James Sutherland: Inland Trader 1751-1797', *The Beaver* (Winter 1975), 18-23. There is interesting demographic detail in John Nicks, 'Orkneymen in the H B C 1780-1821', *Old Trails and New Directions,* 102-26, which also has a piece by Richard I. Ruggles on 'Hudson's Bay Company Mapping', 24-36. For Samuel Wegg see another article by Ruggles, 'Governor Samuel Wegg: "The Winds of Change" ', *The Beaver* (Autumn 1976), 10-20.

VI. FUR-TRADE RIVALRY AND UNION

Much information on the Indians of the western interior in this period is contained in Ray, *Indians in the Fur Trade,* Chs. 5-9; and see also, Trudy Nicks, 'The Iroquois and the Fur Trade in Western Canada', in *Old Trails and New Directions,* 85-101. John Nicks, 'Diary of a Young Fur Trader: The 1789-1790 Journal of Thomas Staynor', in Lewis H. Thomas, ed., *Essays on Western History* (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1976), 17-30, has interesting material on the trade struggle on the North Saskatchewan. For the Athabasca campaigns, and especially their effect on the Indians, see two articles by James Parker, 'The Fur Trade and the Chipewyan Indian', *Western Canadian Journal of Anthropology,* III (1972), 43-57, and 'The Struggle for the Athabasca', in *Essays on Western History,* 33-46; also an important article by W. A. Sloan, 'The Native Response to the Extension of the European Traders into the Athabasca and Mackenzie Basin, 1770-1814', *Canadian Historical Review,* LX (1979), 281-99. Mitchell, *Fort Timiskaming,* uses Angus Cameron's journal to illuminate rivalry in the Timiskaming area; for another view of the conflict see 'James Tate's Journal, 1809-12', in *Hudson's Bay Miscellany,* 95-105.

VII. THE SIMPSON ERA

Considerably more published material on Simpson has become available since 1970: a new biography by John S. Galbraith, *The Little Emperor: Governor Simpson of the Hudson's Bay Company* (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1976); an edition of the letters written by Simpson on his journey around the world in Glyndwr Williams, ed., *London Correspondence Inward from Sir George Simpson 1841-42* (H B R S, XXIX, London, 1973); an annotated edition of the Character Book of 1832 in *Hudson's Bay Miscellany,* 151-236; and articles by Elaine Allen Mitchell, 'Sir George Simpson "The Man of Feeling" ', in *People and Pelts,* 83-101, and W. L. Morton, 'Donald A. Smith and Governor George Simpson', *The Beaver* (Autumn 1978), 4-9. On conservation policies see Ray, *Indians in the Fur Trade,* especially Ch. 11. On the Company's work-force see the various articles by Philip Goldring, in particular 'Labour Records of the Hudson's Bay Company, 1821-1870', *Archivaria,* No. 11 (Winter 1980-1), 53-86. On the ethnic composition of the Company's labour force see Carol M. Judd, ' "Mixt Bands of Many Nations": 1821-70', in *Old Trails and New Directions,* 127-46.

VIII. THE PACIFIC COAST

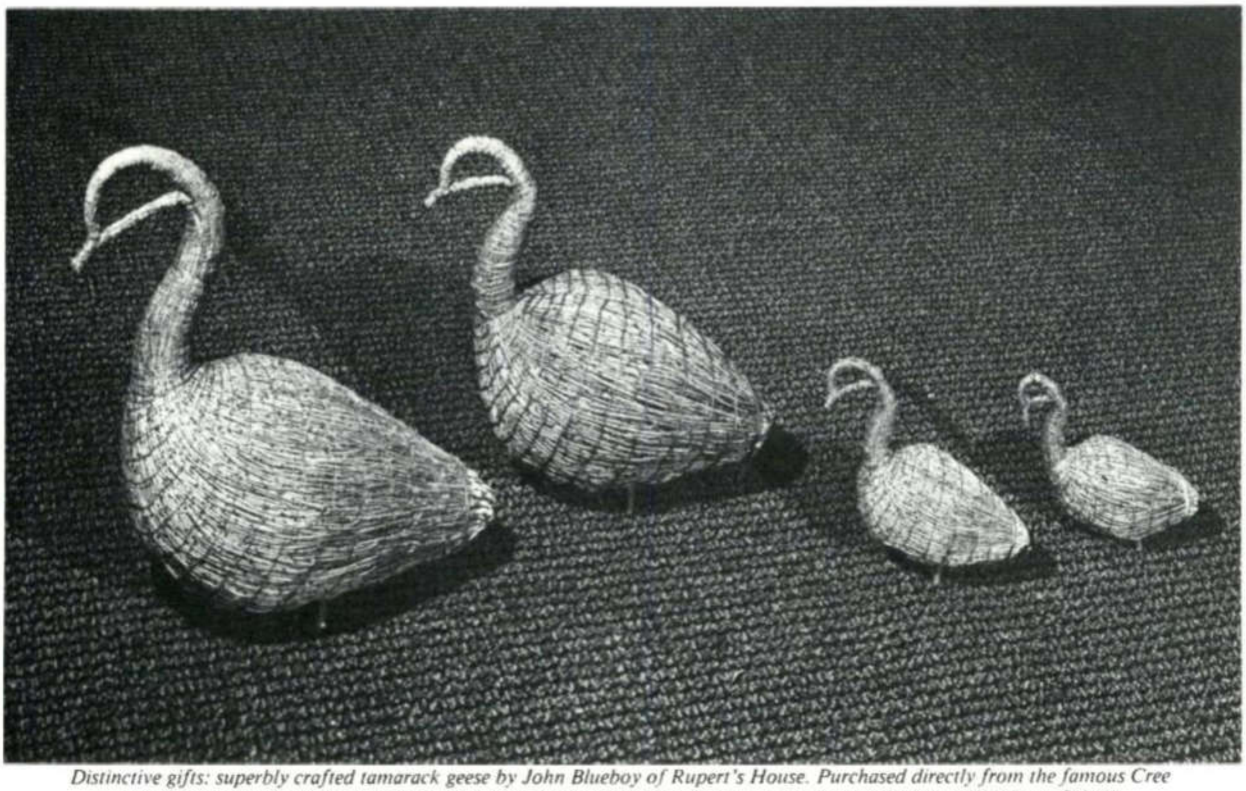
On the fur trade and the Indians there is much information and comment in Robin Fisher, *Contact and Conflict: Indian-European Relations in British Columbia, 1774-1890* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1977), supplemented by Charles A. Bishop, 'Kwah: A Carrier Chief', *Old Trails and New Directions,* 191-204. For the transportation problems of New Caledonia see Mary Cullen, 'Outfitting New Caledonia 1821-58', *ibid.*, 231-51. Several biographies or memoirs have relevant material: Gloria G. Cline, *Peter Skene Ogden and the Hudson's Bay Company* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1974); Dorothy Blakey Smith, ed., *The Reminiscences of Doctor John Sebastian Helmcken* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1975); Jean Murray Cole, *Exile in the Wilderness: the Biography of Chief Factor Archibald McDonald 1790-1853* (Don Mills, Ont.: Burns & MacEachern, 1979). The Hudson's Bay Record Society has reached the post-McLoughlin period on the West Coast in Hartwell Bowsfield, ed., *Fort Victoria Letters 1846-1851* (H B R S, XXXII, Winnipeg, 1979).

IX. FAMILY AND COMMUNITY IN THE FUR TRADE

Fundamental to this section are the books and articles of Sylvia Van Kirk, *'Many Tender Ties': Women in Fur-Trade Society in Western Canada, 1670-1870* (Winnipeg: Watson & Dwyer, 1980); 'Women and the Fur Trade', *The Beaver* (Winter 1972), 4-21; ' "The Custom of the Country": An Examination of Fur Trade Marriage Practices', in *Essays on Western History*, 49-68; 'Fur Trade Social History: Some Recent Trends', in *Old Trails and New Directions*, 160-73—and of Jennifer S. H. Brown, *Strangers in Blood: Fur Trade Company Families in Indian Country* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1980); ' "A Colony of Very Useful Hands" ', *The Beaver* (Spring 1977), 39-45; 'Ultimate Respectability: Fur-Trade Children in the "Civilized World" ', Pts. I and II, *The Beaver* (Winter 1977), 4-10, and (Spring 1978), 48-55; 'Linguistic Solitudes and Changing Social Categories', in *Old Trails and New Directions*, 147-59. The doctoral theses of John E. Foster and Frits Pannekoek on Red River remain unpublished, but some indication of their approach is given in Foster, 'The Origins of the Mixed Bloods in the Canadian West', in *Essays on Western History*, 71-80, and Pannekoek, 'The Anglican Church and the Disintegration of Red River Society, 1818-1870', in Carl Berger and Ramsay Cook, eds., *The West and the Nation* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1976), 72-90. See also A. N. Thompson, 'John West: A Study of the Conflict between Civilization and the Fur Trade', *Journal of the Canadian Church Historical Society*, XII (1970), 44-57.

X. LAST YEARS OF COMPANY MONOPOLY AND RULE

On the complicated question of relations between the Company, missionaries and Indians there is much material in the works listed in sections VII and IX; but see also Frank A. Peake, 'Fur Traders and Missionaries', in *Western Canadian Journal of Anthropology*, III (1972), 72-93, and Frits Pannekoek, 'Protestant Agricultural Zions for the Western Indian', *Journal of the Canadian Church Historical Society*, XIV (1972), 55-66. To Irene Spry's earlier publications on Palliser should now be added W. L. Morton, *Henry Youle Hind 1823-1908* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1980), and Doug Owram, *Promise of Eden: The Canadian Expansionist Movement and the Idea of the West, 1856-1900* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1980) especially Chs. 1-3. Some indication of the changing role of the Company after 1870 is given in Alan Wilson's fine introduction to Hartwell Bowsfield, ed., *The Letters of Charles John Brydges 1879-1882* (H B R S, XXXI, Winnipeg, 1977).



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